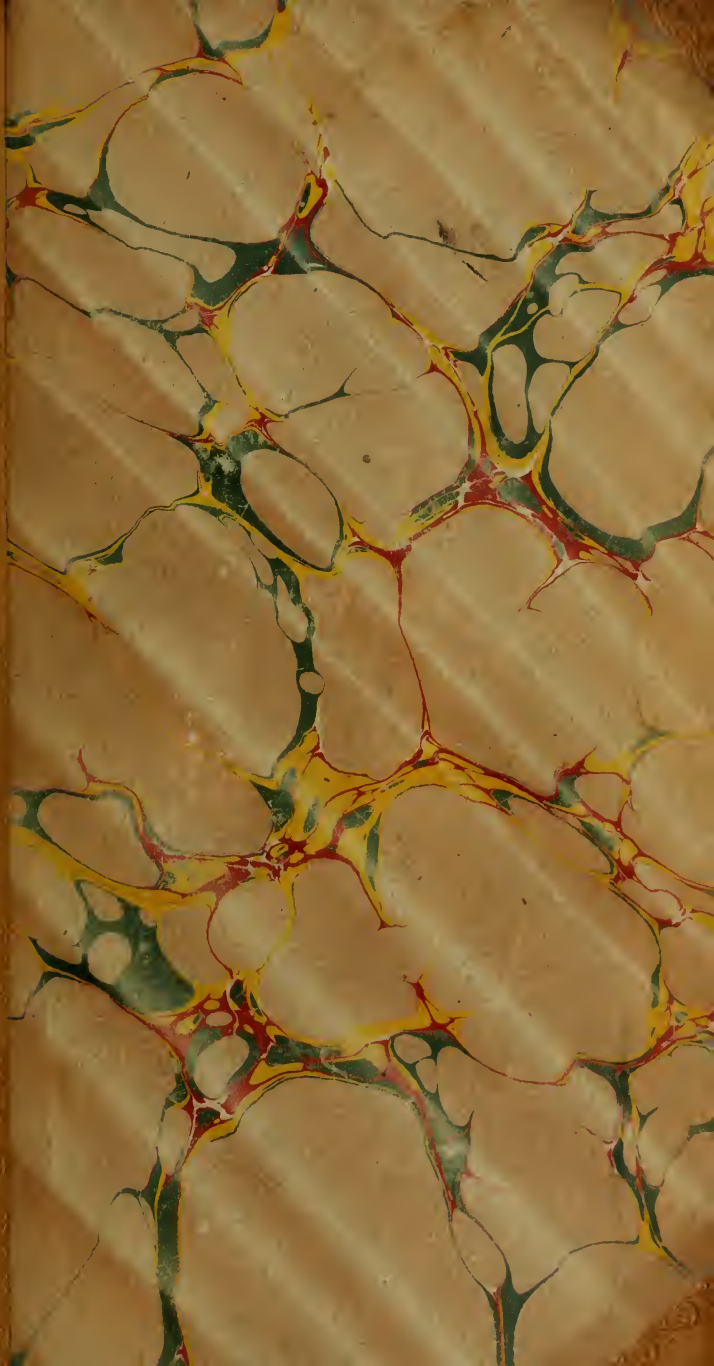

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TALES

OF

A BRIEFLESS BARRISTER.

No court
Grants out a writ of summons for the conscience.
I must have witness, and of your producing,
Ere this can come to hearing, and it must
Be heard on oath and witness.

BEN JONSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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SECOND THOUGHTS ARE BEST.

CONTINUED.

SECOND THOUGHTS ARE BEST.

CHAPTER XVII.

When Frederick Stratton met Mr. Brownlow before breakfast, that gentleman, in a very pleasant and friendly tone said, "Now, my good friend, you behaved yourself very well yesterday indeed; and without compromising your principles, you did not do violence to any one's feelings."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," replied the young gentleman; "I can assure you that I spent a very pleasant evening, and I

will acknowledge, pleasanter than I anticipated. What you had told me concerning the two clergymen, prepared me to expect to see men of very different habits and manners."

"Did you ever," asked Mr. Brownlow, "meet with persons and scenes precisely the same as you had anticipated? If you ever have done so, your experience differs from that of the generality of mankind."

I cannot say that I ever have," replied the young man; "but there is something unpleasant and mortifying in being disappointed."

"That," answered Mr. Brownlow, "altogether depends upon the nature of the disappointment. It is sometimes our hap to expect to meet with disagreeable circumstances and events, and then it is pleasant to be disappointed. But I understand you perfectly well, when you speak of the unpleasantness of being disappointed. You have even in that feeling the Quixotic emotion which my friend Wright alluded to yesterday. Don Quixote was desirous of fighting with giants just as a fox-hunter is ambitious of a fox-chase.

The Don professed to contend with the giants for the purpose of doing away with violence, tyranny, and injustice; but he experienced an heroic pleasure in the sport, and therefore would have been sorry to be undeceived. Now acknowledge, is there not some such feeling as this in your mind? Have you not some little pleasure in heroically declaiming against abuses and wickednesses; and does it not interfere with the pleasure of your sport to find that there is not quite so much abomination as you expected? Don Quixote might have been mortified when he discovered, after his conflict, that his battle had been with a windmill instead of a giant, but he would have been more mortified still, had he previously ascertained that the object which he took for a giant was nothing but a windmill."

"There may be some truth in what you say," answered Frederick Stratton, "but I cannot give up my views and feelings of the proper principles of society."

"It is not desirable that you should; I am

not attempting to render you indifferent to right and wrong, or careless of the distinction between good and evil; I am merely stating a common and injurious feeling, which almost universally belongs to those who are zealous for the rectification of abuses. They are so bent upon reformation, that they are determined to see a necessity for it, whether such necessity exists or not. I had a specimen of that yesterday. You remember how long I was kept out of the room, and you may remember seeing me laugh very heartily when I returned."

"I do," replied Frederick; "but you did not say what it was that caused your laughter."

"No; but I will tell you now. I have a cousin living in London who is, with me, guardian to a niece of mine. The young lady usually lives with me and keeps my house, and her mother, my brother's widow, lives with us too. My cousin is very proud of his office of guardian, rather troublesomely so; he is proud of exhibiting his ward, and at the same time in great alarm lest she should form an improper

acquaintance. Yet, notwithstanding this, he is filling his house with a miscellaneous host of people, under pretext of a *conversazione;* and at one of these parties, he hears, that some individual, of no fortune or family, has admired the young lady; and thereupon, at a moment's——"

The entrance of Amelia and her mother put a stop to the conversation; the interruption was of no moment to Frederick, he was too glad to see the young lady, to have any curiosity to hear more concerning her. If to his eye she had been beautiful and interesting when he had seen her in the evening at Mr. Riddleton's, far more beautiful did she look in the calmness and quiet of a country home. If Frederick Stratton had given a description of her as she appeared to him that morning and that moment of entering the room, he would have said, that he never beheld any human being, as to form and figure, so perfect, and in movement so graceful, and at the same time so perfectly unconscious of any superiority in that respect. He would have said that she had all the

simplicity of a child, and yet an expression of countenance that indicated a considerable maturity of judgment; that she was most perfectly at ease, not apparently from confidence and self-conceit, but from the very fulness and entireness of her simplicity, from the total absence of affectation. He would have said that her features were harmonious, and that her manner of arranging her ringlets over the fine arch of her forehead, gave an indescribable classical beauty to a face as beautiful and fair as aught of mortal birth. He would have said that the tones of her voice inspired affection and friendship; he would have said that she was too pure for the admiration of the vicious, and too intelligent to sacrifice herself to a simpleton. And in saying all this, he would have said nothing but the truth.

The young gentleman was now in a little perplexity; he had accepted Mr. Brownlow's invitation to spend a day with him; that day had been spent; and therefore it seemed but

right and orderly, that within a reasonable time after breakfast, he should take his leave, and he could not help wishing that breakfast might last all day long. He saw, at least he was fully persuaded in his own mind that he saw, that Amelia Brownlow was very intelligent, and he wished to hear her converse, and he wished also that she might hear him; but he knew not how to accomplish his wishes either one way or the other. That, however, which he could not manage directly, he attempted circuitously, and not having sufficient confidence, or being too polite to address the young lady, he directed his discourse to Mr. Brownlow.

"It appears to me, Sir," the young gentleman said, "that there has not been sufficient attention paid to the promotion of what may be called civil knowledge; I mean that knowledge by which we regulate our feelings and opinions on matters of national policy."

"Do I understand you rightly?" said Mr.

Brownlow; "Do you think that politics are not made a sufficiently prominent part of education?"

"My meaning is nearly that," replied Frederick; "I think that there is a want of knowledge of general principles. Young persons are instructed in the arts and sciences, and in some principles of morals and religion, but there seems to be too great an abhorrence of what are called political subjects, and by the very suppression of them, men are prepared for passive obedience and non-resistance."

"I differ from you altogether, my good Sir," answered Mr. Brownlow; "I think that sufficient information is given upon that, as upon any other moral topic, when a distinction is taught between right and wrong, and good and evil; and I think that when men arrive at years of discretion, they have nothing to do but to apply their general knowledge to particular circumstances. I will concede to you, that the

more attention that the public pays to political subjects, the more civil liberty the state will enjoy."

"That's exactly what I mean, Sir," exclaimed Frederick, with great warmth and earnestness; "I think that people surrender their liberties for a crotchet of mere courtesy."

"To be sure they do," answered Mr. Brownlow; "the French have not so much liberty as the Americans have, nor are the Americans so courteous and polite a people as the French. The one prefers liberty to politeness, and the other thinks politeness worth the sacrifice of a little liberty."

"But is not liberty worth any sacrifice?"

Mr. Brownlow smiled, and said, "Now, if I were to say decidedly no, you would think of me as your natural courtesy would not like to speak."

Frederick, with a little hesitation, replied, "I have uniformly felt that liberty is the great-

est blessing that mankind can enjoy, and I think that the greatest and best of men have been always favourable to liberty."

"No doubt of it," said Mr. Brownlow; "and yet the advocates of liberty have not agreed precisely as to what political liberty really is. For the sake of liberty, men have submitted to great privations; and, if I may so speak, they have made themselves the slaves of liberty. To some persons, the uncourteous and blustering manners of the freest people are offensive and disagreeable."

"But," said Frederick, "there may be a love of liberty, with, at the same time, the utmost courtesy and politeness of manners."

"That there may be, is possible; but is there? or rather, is not almost every act of courtesy, more or less, an encroachment on liberty? Are we not in society perpetually surrendering our liberty to save our politeness? Last night, when my cousin Riddleton kept me away from my company, I was perfectly at li-

berty to tell him that his visit was unseasonable, and that it would be more agreeable to me if he would take his departure. It did not suit my taste to say so, therefore I tolerated the annoyance."

At that moment, much to the satisfaction and delight of Frederick Stratton, Amelia opened her lovely lips, and said,—"Uncle, I must not allow you to call Mr. Riddleton an annoyance. He is a great favourite of mine, and I like him notwithstanding all his oddities."

Frederick thought the young lady's voice the most agreeable that he had ever heard, nor did he at that moment look back with any regret to the society of the gypsies; but he directed his eyes most approvingly to her who had spoken so candidly of Mr. Riddleton. And most undoubtedly he would have been emboldened to utter some expression of approbation, had not Mr. Brownlow anticipated him, saying, "I will not call Mr. Riddleton an annoyance, my dear; but his company was an annoyance to me last

night, and I absolutely wished him gone; but I did not behave rudely to him, or even coldly."

"He is such a benevolent man," replied Amelia.

"I agree with you, entirely, my dear," answered Mr. Brownlow; "but still it requires an effort of politeness to endure patiently his long and circuitous manner of telling a story; and there is something rather humorous in his affectation of mysteriousness."

"There is so, indeed," said the young lady; "and you cannot imagine how great curiosity I feel to be made acquainted with the mystery of your last night's conversation. He has been talking very mysteriously to me, and questioning me, in a very circuitous manner, concerning the party who were present at our last *conversazione.* I verily believe that he imagines I know the name, birth, parentage, and education, of every individual who was present. I cannot form the slightest conjec-

ture of his object in making these inquiries, but I have no doubt it was all from a motive of pure benevolence."

"That I can assure you it was," said Mr. Brownlow; "and from a motive of benevolence towards you."

"Towards me, indeed? Now you have excited my curiosity."

"But I do not intend to gratify it."

"Then," replied the young lady, "I must make myself as easy as possible with my curiosity ungratified."

In this reply there was nothing very magnanimous or heroic; it was, at best, but making a virtue of necessity, and a virtue not of the sublimest nature. Frederick Stratton, however, thought that it manifested great good sense, and very good and proper feeling, and in his own mind he praised her for it. Love has certainly produced much mischief in the world, and occasioned a great deal of misery; nevertheless, it has been the means of infinitely

more good than evil. For one tragedy, it has produced a hundred comedies; to say nothing of farces. One of its great blessings is the spirit of candour with which it teaches us to regard each other. In a beloved one, there is no fault; and not only are blemishes overlooked, but virtues are brightened and extolled to the highest point of perfection.

The young gentleman had felt various obstacles to his scheme of universal rectification, in the contemplation of divers characters, which, though needing reform, did not seem likely to adopt it. He had considered the stupidity and low craftiness of Tom Shepherd, and the selfish subtlety of Tom's legal adviser. He had looked with much amusement at the coxcomical conceit of Mr. Spratt, and the carelessness and indolence of Theodore Clarke. He also remembered the magnificence of Mrs. White the tobacconist, and her, to say the least of it, due sense of her own dignity. Moreover, he could not but think of the apathy and in-

difference with which the two Brownlows regarded the rectification of things in general. But when he saw before him in the person of Amelia Brownlow, a combination of all that was lovely, excellent, amiable, praiseworthy, and so forth, he still farther doubted whether there was an absolute necessity for universal change, in the habits, manners, and characters of all mankind. In addition to these reflections, there also entered into his mind a painful, because fruitless wish, that the condition of his own birth had been different. Angry as he might have been heretofore with the arrangements and institutions of society, his feeling now was of regret, that his father and himself had not been more seriously mindful of that arrangement, and those institutions. And while these reflections were passing across his mind, he came also to think, that as circumstances had modified his own feelings, and revolutionized his own sentiments, and that without any great and decided effort on the

part of others; so might also similar and corresponding changes be wrought, where necessary, on the minds of others. No longer did he admire the simple originality of style in which the gypsies lived; and he felt that there was something desirable and pleasant in the habits and constitution of civilized society.

More rapidly than pen can describe it, did the above meditations pass through the mind of Frederick Stratton, and if any thing were wanting to complete the conquest, and to fix the change effectually, that was supplied by the means of Mr. Brownlow, who, addressing himself to the young man, said, "Mr. Stratton, have you ever seen the Abbey church at St. Alban's?"

"Never, Sir," answered the young man, who formerly, and that very recently, had felt no small contempt for abbey churches, and minsters, and cathedrals.

"Perhaps you would have no objection to an excursion there to-day? It is the only object in

this neighbourhood of any great interest; at least, so I think, for I am a great admirer of architectural antiquities."

Frederick could not say that he had no such taste, and that he had no reverence for antiquity; nor would he so far violate the strictness of truth, as to avow that which he did not feel. But he could say, and that with the greatest truth, that he should have very great pleasure in joining the party on so an agreeable excursion. He made, however, some attempt, a very faint one, indeed, to say something about returning to town, and finishing his visit; but very readily did he suffer himself to be persuaded by Mr. Brownlow to spend one more day with him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When the arrangement had been made for the excursion to St. Alban's, there came an interruption in the form of letters from Nettlethorpe. Scarcely had Frederick Stratton commenced reading that which was directed to him, when his hilarity of look abated, and a dark frown passed over his countenance; and in the course of the perusal, several changes of expression might be manifest, which will be best accounted for by the language of the letter itself. That which Frederick Stratton read was as follows:—

"MY DEAR BOY;

"I thank you again and again for the filial

solicitude you have displayed in this most painful and distressing juncture; you have taken a burden off my mind which, by its agonies, had nearly brought me to the grave. Now my spirits revive, and I am cheerful, and so happy, that I feel satisfied that life has done its utmost for me. It may sound strangely, but I felt that there is truth in the expression, when I say that, from the delight I now experience, I am as willing to die as, formerly, from my uneasiness, I was wishing my life at an end. What an unprincipled wretch must that Shepherd have been. But he is a weak and ignorant man, he knows no better. I shall continue the payment to him, not for his sake, but for my own: I feel too proud to withhold it. When shall we see you again? Your mother has now a right to the name she has borne so long: she has been an honour to the name, and a blessing to those who have borne it. Now, my dear child, I have leisure of mind to think more of you and for you. I am delighted with

the manifest alteration and improvement which I have observed in you; but I am still anxious for you, and shall be till you are settled as a domestic man. You have not in former days shown regard to my authority, but in later days you have manifested an interest in my feelings, and I trust in this matter to which I allude you will show yourself not unmindful of me and my happiness, for my happiness is in your welfare. I have no right, perhaps, to speak on this subject; I have not set you an example, but may yet speak to you in the language of caution. I may also request of you, that you will so far regard my advice in the most momentous arrangement for the decision of your condition in life, that you will not form any engagement unknown to me. I have suffered much, though not so much as many would have done under the circumstances. I have been comparatively fortunate. I would not by any means speak authoritatively; I merely ask it as a personal favour; I appeal to your

affection for me. It may be necessary that I should here explain myself. I have a wife in view for you; I wish you to see her, and I believe my wish will soon be gratified. Perhaps it might be more politic to say nothing till you meet; but I have a better opinion of your judgment and state of mind than to imagine that you would oppose my wishes merely from caprice.—Since I began this letter, I have had another from Shepherd, in which he confesses very circumstantially, and honestly, if such word can apply to him, all the particulars of his first concealed marriage, and he has sent me the letters, which he had from my father, and has thrown himself upon my compassion. It seems, however, that we should never have made the discovery, if it had not been for the fellow's covetousness; for his wife followed him to England, in consequence of her suspicions that the story of the estate was a mere invention. But all that trouble is now happily over, and I shall be glad never to hear or utter the name

again. You said in your last, that you were going to spend a day or two in Hertfordshire, therefore I have directed this to be forwarded to you, that you might lose no time in returning. We are all anxious to see you home, and I trust you will find your home more cheerful than you left it. If, after our strange and rude behaviour to Captain Hartley, you can persuade him to join our party, we shall be all most happy to see him. I am writing in a hurry, and in an agitation of spirits, which, though excited by agreeable occurrences, is by no means altogether pleasant.

"All kind wishes follow you, from your mother and sisters and affectionate father,

PHILIP STRATTON."

This letter was not absolutely pleasant. Frederick Stratton was not quite in love with Amelia, but he fully intended to be so as soon as he reasonably could. Now, in former days, the young man would not have been so much

perplexed by such a request, nor would Mr. Stratton have conveyed that request in such measured terms. There had been a change in both parties. Frederick had felt great pleasure in acting towards his father the part of a friend, and by this conduct had a greater regard for his father than he had ever felt before. And could Mr. Stratton the elder have at this moment been witness to the feelings and emotions of his son's mind, he would have seen how powerful are the guidings of affection compared with the impellings of mere authority. There is in every mind, or in almost every mind, a principle of obstinacy against mere authority; the very circumstance of command seems to provoke resistance; while there are few who can be totally insensible to the attractions of affection. Parents little think how much power they lose by the assumption of authority, and it is perhaps one of the most imprudent steps which authority can take to presume beyond its actual power of enforcing; for nothing

looks so truly ridiculous as vanquished authority.

Frederick Stratton was now beginning to have a consciousness that he was thinking and acting like the rest of the world. The social principle had taken hold of him. He had something to think about, personally and domestically, and therefore the grand renovation of all things past, present, and to come, did not absorb the whole of his thoughts. He read his father's letter over and over again, and thought of giving an immediate reply to it, soliciting leave to choose a wife for himself, when and where it might best suit his inclination. And if he pleased, he could have written a very eloquent and argumentative letter on the subject; but he had some recollection, that he had somewhere heard that arguments only convince those who use them.

Moreover, he was very uncertain of the progress and success of his love for Amelia. He did not for a moment doubt that she was the most beautiful and interesting creature that ever

lived, and he was perfectly satisfied that he could not live without her; but he did not know but that her affections might be previously engaged. So it was impossible for him to make an existing engagement of the affections an objection to his father's request. The greatest difficulty of all, was how to spend the day, and how to deport himself towards the young lady; for a commencing attachment is strong when the object of that attachment is present. Frederick had also meditated the paying of very courteous attentions, and he had promised himself that he should make himself exceedingly agreeable; and after such preparations and promises, he was quite unable to reconcile himself to the idea of not accomplishing the fine promises which he had made to himself.

As in these meditations his countenance underwent divers changes, but none of them were indicative of satisfaction, Mr. Brownlow felt himself obliged to enquire whether the young

gentleman had received any unpleasant intelligence from Nettlethorpe.

"None at all," said Frederick, folding up his letter, and attempting to look cheerful.

Mr. Brownlow then handed to his niece the letter which he had been reading, saying, "There my dear, that concerns you as much as it does me, and perhaps rather more."

The young lady speedily read it, and returned it, and said,—"I am quite at your disposal, Sir."

There was nothing in this short conference at all calculated to disturb the mind of a rational lover; but Frederick Stratton was full of fears, and most painfully susceptible. He took it for granted that Amelia, by saying that she was at her uncle's disposal, was alluding to some serious engagement, though the words were uttered without any peculiar seriousness or solemnity. Under all these unpleasant and annoying impressions, the young gentleman joined the party in their excursion to St. Alban's.

Different people have different notions on the

subject of architectural antiquity and the utility of cathedrals and abbey churches. There has been already intimated a difference of opinion on this subject between Frederick Stratton and Mr. Brownlow. When they were walking about and admiring the beauty of the building, each according to his own mode of admiration, a stranger of singular aspect passed and repassed them, looking earnestly and doubtfully at Frederick Stratton. After several meetings, the stranger stopped, and spoke to the party. He was an elderly man, of venerable aspect, of slender figure, habited in black, having a look of care and deep thought, and the general expression of his countenance was that of a man who had been disappointed in the world, and had become weary enough of the world and all that it contains to wish himself fairly out of it. He had seen better days, and his look was such as told of their having been long past away. He was as one whom people can pity without loving. No one could have the heart to behave unkindly to him, but

most would be happy to be rid of his company. Poverty and destitution in their lowest and most abject condition, disturb the calm enjoyment of the opulent, and fain would they who are not in want avoid the sight of those that are. But there is something more painful in the sight of one who feels the present destitution by contrast with the recollection of former abundance. It makes man feel not only a sympathy with the miseries of poverty, but an apprehension and sensation of the uncertainty of wealth. And the stranger seemed conscious of his own uninviting aspect, and that consciousness made the matter worse. He bowed very humbly to Mr. Brownlow and Frederick, and very gracefully to the young lady who was with them.

"Excuse me, Sir," said he, "but I have had the honour, I believe, of meeting you before."

"Very possibly," answered Frederick, "though I do not immediately recollect your person."

"Perhaps not, Sir," said the old man, drawing his hand across his eyes; "I am much altered since I last had the honour of seeing you; and you, Sir, are as much altered for the better, as I am for the worse."

"Will you have the goodness," said Frederick, "to favour me with your name?"

At this request Mr. Brownlow and the young lady left the young man to the sole possession of the stranger, who, seeing that opportunity was thus afforded him for free discourse, began, "My name, Sir, is Williams."

Frederick Stratton started as if he had trod upon a serpent. "Williams!" he exclaimed, "and what, in the name of goodness, has brought you—?"

Frederick paused, as if he had begun a sentence not convenient or agreeable to finish, and yet too long to retract.

"Yes, Sir," said Williams; "you may well ask me what has brought me to this situation. I am not as you remember to have seen me;

a very short time has brought a melancholy change upon me. I have done what better teachers have not done; I have practised my own precepts."

"And what," said Frederick, "have you gained by that?"

"Nothing; but I have lost my health, and my friends, and my character, and my self-esteem." Then he took hold of Frederick's hand, and said, with a most heart-rending tone, "Those persons who do not know me, take me for a gentleman; those who do, know that I am a beggar!"

Frederick then put into the poor man's hand that which brought tears into his eyes, and drew from him painfully humble acknowledgments; and he manifested his gratitude most effectually, by taking a speedy leave of his benefactor, who was glad enough to feel himself at liberty to join his own party again. The poor man soon disappeared, but the impression was not so soon removed from the mind of Fre-

derick Stratton. He was silent and reserved, leaving Mr. Brownlow and his niece to their own conversation concerning architecture and antiquities. But though Mr. Brownlow had not such comprehensive and grand notions of universal rectification as Frederick Stratton had once professed, he was by no means indifferent or inattentive to that which concerned the welfare and happiness of individuals. He therefore felt uneasy at the manifest symptoms of disturbed thought which appeared in the young man's look, and might also be inferred from his silence. Mr. Brownlow was too considerate to make direct inquiry, and too curious not to give some hints of wishing to know the mystery of the aged and afflicted man; and one reason why this gentleman was curious to know who and what was the person who had spoken to Frederick was, that he suspected that this person was one of Frederick's associates in the days of his wanderings. Nor was he very wide of the mark. For when, after a short interval

of awkward silence, the party was beginning to be sociable again, the young man said to Mr. Brownlow, "That poor man whom you saw speaking to me was, a very few years ago, to all appearance twenty years younger than he looks now. He was a man of some property, and I thought, of some ability, and even genius."

"From his very humble manner of addressing you," answered Mr. Brownlow, "he appeared more like a suppliant than an old acquaintance."

"He is both," replied Frederick: "I have never felt such a shock as the sight of that poor man has given me. My heart bleeds at the thought of what he is, and of what he was. About four years ago, I met him at a tavern in London; he had been one of my hearers when —but it is unpleasant for me to recall those days."

Frederick Stratton paused, recollecting that he was in the presence of one to whom he was desirous of rendering himself agreeable, and before whom he was desirous of appearing in

the most favourable light. Mr. Brownlow saw his embarrassment, and said, "You may not be pleased at these recollections, but they have their use, for they give a more instructive lesson than any language can."

Frederick continued: "Well, then, I will proceed. This man had been among those who were listening to an harangue which I delivered in the neighbourhood of London, and on the afternoon of the same day I met with him at a tavern in the city. He recognised me immediately, and paid me some compliments, with which I was more pleased then than I am now. He seemed very heartily to enter into my views of society, and he talked, as I then thought, most rationally and most eloquently. What a difference does a little time make in our views and feelings! Time not only changes our feelings and tastes, which is indeed not to be wondered at, but it changes also our apprehensions and our reasonings."

"And that," added Mr. Brownlow, "is no

more to be wondered at than the other; for very much of our reasoning depends upon our feelings and tastes."

"They have some influence, no doubt," said Frederick; "but is it not strange that there should be a different apprehension of abstract truths at different periods of life?"

"There are very few abstract truths," said Mr. Brownlow, "of which we have any apprehension at all. Almost all the truths which interest us are those connected more or less with our own feelings of advantage or disadvantage, convenience or inconvenience."

"I believe," said Frederick, "that what you say is too true; but may there not be a pure love of truth?"

"There may be," said Mr. Brownlow, "and undoubtedly there is; yet two very honest, intelligent, pure-minded individuals may arrive at different conclusions from the same premises. It is not generous or decently modest in any one to affirm or insinuate that persons not hold-

ing precisely the same opinions as himself, are therefore deficient in honesty or understanding. But let me hear something more of this stranger."

"It is not much," replied Frederick, "that I know of his history, but, as I said before, I met him by accident, and we entered into conversation concerning the principles of society, and he most ingeniously, and to my then feeling and apprehensions convincingly proved that mankind was acting generally and almost universally under a delusion. I had entertained, and had long entertained, a notion, that one man had no right over another to command or direct him in any one action or condition of his life; and this person listened to my talk, and approved my sentiments, and corroborated me in my opinions; and as he was an older man than myself, his reasonings and declamations produced the greater effect upon my mind, and I fancied that my logic was irrefragable, and that, by what I called the power of truth, I

should be able to bring the world to my way of thinking. There was, however, one point in which my acquaintance went to greater lengths than ever I contemplated, and in some degree brought me partly over to his way of thinking. He proved, or attempted to prove, to me the utter nothingness of what is called morality. His reasoning was new to me, and I thought it ingenious, and almost demonstrative, till I saw more of human beings and felt the influence of society, and observed the results of the practice of those principles. That poor man followed his own principles practically and theoretically, and he has lost thereby his property, his health, his reputation, and his friends."

"And all this," interposed Mr. Brownlow, "has arisen from the man's excessive vanity, from thinking himself so much wiser than the rest of the world."

When Frederick had finished his narrative, he felt himself relieved, and more cheerfully

said, "Let us drop these unpleasant topics." Then looking round more attentively and observantly at the building in which they were standing, said, "There certainly is a degree of beauty and magnificence in these old ecclesiastical structures which renders them very interesting. I feel a pleasure in seeing them, I do acknowledge, though in thinking or speaking of them, I feel disposed to condemn them as monuments of superstition, or an idle waste of human labour and an abuse of time."

"It would be difficult," said Mr. Brownlow, "to decide what is a waste of time. And I believe that there are few occupations of man in a state of civilization or even in a savage state, which may not be proved to be a waste of time. But I observe that those ingenious reasoners, who make so much parade of their wisdom in declaiming about the true and proper economy of time, are in the condition of misers who declaim concerning the economy of money; for these latter are ingenious to prove

that this is a needless expense, and that is a needless expense, till in the end they have no enjoyment from their money; and the former are ingenious in showing how time is wasted by various occupations, till at length, from the fear of making an improper use of time, they make no use of it at all."

"But some employments are more useful than others," said Frederick.

"True," replied Mr. Brownlow; "but we must not spend all our time in discussing how we ought to employ it.

"It is some satisfaction to me," said Frederick, "that my time has not been altogether ill-spent this morning. I have learned a moral lesson since I have been here, and while I have received instruction, I have communicated relief."

"I think," said Amelia, who had hitherto been an attentive listener to the conversation, "that it is impossible to make a better use of our time than to employ it in contributing to

the happiness of our fellow-creatures, and to the improvement of ourselves."

There was not any great degree of originality or profundity in the remark, but it was uttered so very pleasantly, that Frederick was delighted with the speaker, and he gave her a look of thanks, and a smile of approbation, and a gentle inclination of the head, scarcely amounting to a bow. Now this mode of acknowledgment was more impressive, than a good set speech would have been; and as there passed through Frederick's mind at that moment a truly grateful and amiable feeling, that feeling was manifested by his looks; and the young lady thought him an amiable and an excellent man.

Much as Frederick Stratton was pleased with his present companions, and satisfied as he felt that he had been happy in escaping from the demoralizing influence of his former associates, he was far from being perfectly at ease. There was so much in the manner of Amelia that was pleasing, and even fascinating, that it required

an effort to withdraw his attention from her; and yet he could not but fear, that for one, situated as he was, and had been, there must be obstacles insurmountable in the way of his fondest expectations.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE morning after the excursion to St. Alban's brought a fresh arrival to the house of Mr. Brownlow. To the eye, indeed, the person arriving was by no means important. He did not appear, from any personal indications, to be one of those indispensable beings that the world cannot do without. Insignificant, however, as was his appearance, he was a man of high consideration in his own immediate neighbourhood. He was in possession of a large estate, and of that influence which property very naturally confers. But there was one drawback to his greatness, which alone himself was not aware of, viz. that he enjoyed all the con-

sideration which he possessed in virtue of his property. He had the disadvantage of an imperfect education, which had cost his parents about ten times as much money as if he had been properly and amply instructed and disciplined. As an only child, he had been indulged in every possible humour and caprice; and had it not been a thing altogether unprecedented in the annals of fashion, very probably his father and mother would not have suffered their pretty darling, and the hopes of the family, to be pestered with any such useless labour as learning. It was, however, a *sine qua non* that the young gentleman should have an education; but care was abundantly taken that learning should be made as easy as possible to him. As there is a proverb which says, that many hands make light work, many teachers had been by the parents of this young squire provided for his instruction in the various arts and sciences. The strictest injunctions were given to all these

instructors, to use the utmost diligence to inform the young gentleman's mind, without wearying or exhausting his spirits; for very wisely did the father observe, what is the use of tutors, unless they communicate in the shortest possible manner all the information which they possess? In the acquisition of languages, both learned and unlearned, father and son had a mortal antipathy to dictionaries and grammars, thinking them very vulgar things, and fit only for charity schools. And when an instructor ventured to suggest the probability that young master might forget what was thus lightly communicated; the parent, wiser than the tutor, said, "If he forgets it, then tell him again." Moreover, great care was taken that he should not injure his health, nor spoil his beauty by laborious application; and as tutors are generally very vulgar creatures, the young gentleman's father had endeavoured to counteract their vulgarity, and prevent it from having an

ill effect on the pupil; and for this purpose introduced the boy rather more early than was prudent into the society of his elders.

At the age of twenty-two the young squire came into possession of his estate, of which, and of his person, he was exceedingly proud. Soon after the inheritance became his own, he was introduced to Mr. Brownlow, and, of course, to Mr. Brownlow's niece. Beautiful, however, as was the young lady, and possessed as she was of every mental accomplishment and moral embellishment, the young gentleman had not been captivated at first sight, and probably might never have been captivated at all, had it not been that he was continually hearing from his acquaintance and friends high enconiums on the lady's excellent qualities; then he bethought himself that he could not do better than provide for the completion of his establishment, and the embellishment of his house and estate, by a marriage with this distinguished and highly-extolled young lady. With this view he had paid

many visits to Mr. Brownlow, even more than that gentleman, with all his courtesy and hospitality, altogether approved; not that he was fearful on the young lady's account, but he was wearied with the young gentleman's inanity.

As the carriage approached the house, Mr. Brownlow said to Frederick, "Now here comes one of the most insufferable coxcombs living. I wish you could stay with us till he takes his departure; I cannot understand the object of his visits. He will sometimes stay here two or three days lounging about the house, and drawling and prating and yawning by way, I suppose, of making himself agreeable to Amelia."

Frederick smiled and said, "You are satirical, Sir."

"No, indeed, I am not," said Mr. Brownlow, "I am telling you the literal truth, and you will have a demonstration of it presently."

Scarcely had these words been uttered, when the door was opened, and a servant announced Mr. Mortimer. Mr. Mortimer followed the

annunciation of his name, and approached Mr. Brownlow, saying, in a most affected tone, "Well, Brownlow, here I am again, I suppose you will be tired of my company."

Mr. Mortimer was proceeding without seeming to notice the presence of a stranger, when Mr. Brownlow interrupted him by introducing him to Mr. Stratton. At which introduction Mr. Mortimer looked with something like contempt on Frederick, for he bore not by any means the appearance of a man of fashion, inasmuch as his clothes had been made by a country tailor; and Mr. Mortimer was also aware that Mr. Brownlow was occasionally visited by individuals in a more humble sphere of life than himself. There was also another cause of ill humour, in the fact, that the young squire was particularly desirous of having Mr. Brownlow's company to himself, for the visit now paid was with the intention of making express proposals for the young lady. When great folks are annoyed by little folks, it is astonishing to see

what withering looks of contempt they can give to the little folks. The difference in altitude on the present occasion was not so much in Mr. Mortimer's favour, as to enable him to look down with contempt upon Frederick, for the six inches difference in their stature was in favour of Frederick Stratton. But as the indignant squire recollected the deference and respect which was paid to his opulence in his own immediate neighbourhood, it occurred to him that he would let Mr. Stratton understand how great a man was in his company, and thus crush the intruder by a sense of his own utter and comparative insignificance. Mr. Mortimer, therefore, without taking any farther notice of Frederick Stratton, immediately after the introduction to him, turned his back as nearly as he could, and said to Mr. Brownlow, "So I have bought the horses of Tomkins. I showed him a check for five hundred pounds, and he could not resist it. But I don't think that now I have them I shall drive four, it looks rather pompous."

So thought Frederick Stratton; and also he thought that, from the size of the person in question, two horses would not have much difficulty in drawing him.

"What use can you make of them," said Mr. Brownlow, "if you don't drive them in your carriage?"

"Perhaps I may use them when I am sheriff, if his Majesty should think proper to trust me with that high office."

Mr. Brownlow bowed half ironically to the possible sheriff, and said, "Could his Majesty better consult the welfare of your county than by nominating you for sheriff?"

Mr. Mortimer made no immediate reply to this speech, but he was manifestly gratified with it; for he had not the slightest apprehension of that figure of speech which is called irony. He was a realist in the plainest sense of the word, and thought that words could have but one meaning, and that that was the

meaning which was most agreeable to his own self-love.

But Frederick Stratton was still insensible to all emotion or feeling of reverence for the greatness of the little man. He thought not of any alteration effected by the means of wealth, in the character or greatness of any individual. He was, however, somewhat amused by the ridiculous attempt which the young squire made to show himself off as a person of consequence. It had been too much the habit of Frederick to consider men in the gross, and to regard them merely numerically; and it was therefore valuable and beneficial to him, when circumstances brought him to consider them individually. He was not the first, nor will he be the last, to speculate upon the idea of modelling the whole species and every individual according to one and the same pattern. By the contemplation of individuals in their several shades and varieties of cha-

racter, he was gradually led to a more sober and practical way of thinking; and he by degrees became reconciled to surrender his mighty expectations, and to be content with a less degree of glory, than that of rectifying all possible and imaginary disorders in the state and condition of society. It was easy for him to see a wide difference of character between Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Mortimer; and very readily could he apprehend, that a society of men like the former, would be managed and modulated differently from a society of men like the latter; and from thence the transition was easy to the conclusion, that a society of individuals of an infinite diversity of character and condition, could not be managed and arranged according to the views and opinions of one individual. All these things, indeed, he might have seen and known before, but he did not, because his attention had not been directed to them; and though varieties of character, bearing instruction in that variety, had passed

before him, they had passed without effect, because all the energy of his mind, and the fervour of his attention, had been directed by his own speculations and prospects.

As sympathy with his father's agitations and sufferings had, in the first instance, awakened his mind; so a concern for his own happiness in his growing regard for Amelia Brownlow, contributed to keep alive the same spirit, and bring him from the contemplation of the whole mass of society, to a consideration of individuals. It is not saying too much to affirm that he felt a jealousy of Mr. Mortimer; and a still greater and more painful jealousy would he have felt, had he known or thought how many women of superior mind and acquirements, had, from various causes, sacrificed themselves to individuals of mean and narrow understanding. For if in the nobler sex, which man certainly is according to Act of Parliament, there have been many instances of persons of superior understanding and cul-

tivated taste, uniting themselves to silly and opulent, or pretty partners, it is not to be wondered at that they of the weaker sex should, in some few instances, make an ill choice, or suffer themselves to be ill-chosen.

Frederick Stratton, however, did not think much of this; but he knew that constant attentions must make something of an impression: and he was also apprehensive that the circumstances of his own family might soon become generally known, and form an insuperable barrier in his way; for he felt that his father was not in a rank sufficiently exalted to be able to spurn and despise with impunity the decorums of civilized society.

Soon after the arrival of Mr. Mortimer, and while Frederick was perplexedly revolving various thoughts in his mind, a letter was brought to him from Nettlethorpe. And when he saw his father's hand-writing, and recollected the tenor of the last letter from home, fresh perplexities arose in his mind, and he sorrowfully

retired to peruse what he supposed to be a summons for his immediate return to his home.

When he was alone, he gazed mournfully on the outside of the letter, as if he imagined that his pathetic thoughts and silent feelings of expostulation would be almost able to persuade the contents of the epistle to change their nature, and to speak a milder language. There is certainly no use in looking on the outside of a letter, endeavouring to speculate upon, or to conjecture its contents; but when the mind is in perplexity, the conduct and actions are also perplexed.

After an interval of meditation, and previous preparation to answer what he supposed to be the contents of the letter, he ventured to open it, and he was not a little surprised to read as follows:

"MY DEAR FREDERICK,

"I was not aware, till I heard from our

worthy neighbour, that your visit was to Mr. Brownlow. I know not the gentleman personally, having never had the pleasure of meeting him; but I have heard much of the excellence of his character, and the soundness of his mind. I am particularly pleased and flattered with the attention which he has shown you, and if you feel grateful for that attention as you ought to do, I think that your visit may be of great service to you. Under these circumstances I cannot think of hurrying your return, though we shall all be most happy to see you. The lady to whom I alluded in my last is not yet arrived, and therefore I can allow you a little longer leave of absence. I hope there was nothing in my letter which intimated a wish on my part to control you in your choice. I wish to see you married, and all my desire is that you should be united to a person of good family, good sense, and good conduct, one that will rather confirm you in your present sobriety of thought, than lead you back, or still worse, drive you back to your

past vagaries. A letter from Hartley has arrived at Nettlethorpe, the contents of which you shall be made acquainted with when you return. The purport of it is, however, to make proposals for Laura. I have a great respect for Hartley's good qualities, and there is nothing objectionable in point of property; yet I cannot but acknowledge that I wish his connections were different. They may be very respectable in their station, but their very respectability makes them more perplexing. They will not exactly do to associate with, and are not so decidedly low as to be cut by stipulation. Laura is very reserved, from which I apprehend that there is a disposition to accept him. Young persons are in these matters very jealous of any encroachment on what they consider to be their right to judge for themselves; and if they really could and would judge for themselves, I should by no means question their right. The evil is, that they mistake determination for judgment. They are influenced by

temporary feelings, and decide without judging. But I will not discuss this subject, for very likely we may not agree. I can only say that your happiness is mine. Farewell for the present.

Your affectionate father,

PHILIP STRATTON."

The perusal of this letter gave the young man an increased flow of spirits, for it was a virtual liberation from the restrictions imposed in the last. He returned, and rejoined the gentlemen, whom he had left on the arrival of the letter, and found them engaged, the one in laboriously talking, and the other in laboriously listening to common-place. On entering the room, he observed an unusual scowl upon the countenance of the young squire. And had Frederick known what was passing in the mind of Mr. Mortimer, this awful scowl would have been abundantly accounted for. It was in the intention of the squire, after a due introductory

dissertation, setting forth his own gracefulness, and grandeur, and dignity, and his probable acquisition of a seat in the House of Commons, to bless Mr. Brownlow with the intelligence of his intention to offer his hand, and heart, and four new coach-horses, to Amelia. The interruption occasioned by Frederick's entering the room, caused the above-mentioned terrific scowl to disfigure the visage of Mr. Mortimer, and considering how very polite a gentleman the squire was in his own estimation, it was a pity that he could not so far command himself as to subdue his rising wrath, and conceal his towering indignation.

"Your friends at Nettlethorpe are well, I hope," said Mr. Brownlow, unobservant, or regardless of the scowl on the, in general, not very awful countenance of Mr. Mortimer.

"They are all well, I thank you," said Frederick, with much hilarity of look and liveliness of expression.

"And I hope," added Mr. Brownlow, "that

you have received permission to prolong your visit."

Now it being the fact, that he had received permission, and that he was delighted with that permission, and that the indulgence was peculiarly agreeable, especially as connected with other matters, the question excited an extraordinary emotion, which still farther interpreted his feelings towards the fair one. It was with hesitation and difficulty that he replied, " I am not pressed to return immediately."

It is not improbable that, from the manner in which the young man answered the question, Mr. Brownlow began to entertain some suspicions of the state of Frederick's mind towards Amelia; but even if he did entertain such suspicions, he did not act upon them, as Mr. Riddleton would have recommended; for it was not Mr. Brownlow's opinion, that the sum and substance of a guardian's duty consisted in using all possible care to prevent his ward from falling in love. He said, in reply to Frederick,

"Then I hope you will not think of terminating your visit at present."

A muttered reply of acquiescence on the part of the young man concluded the subject.

CHAPTER XX.

With more politeness towards the possible sheriff than Mortimer displayed to Frederick, the latter withdrew and left his companions to their own conversation. A solitary walk is not unpleasant when the mind can employ itself on pleasant thoughts. Frederick at this moment had the satisfaction of this enjoyment, and he strolled through many green lanes and through many fields, and he saw that the country was beautiful, and he became sentimental. He heard the song of the lark, and his own spirit felt as buoyant as if borne upon heavenward wings. He felt himself pleased with every thing, and as the sun was shining brightly, and

the day was cheerful, and the sky cloudless, he thought that the weather was the cause of the gladness of his heart. And why should it not be so? Nevertheless there were with him other causes of gladness; and while he admired the beauty of the scenery, and the agreeableness of the landscape, he was thinking of the lovely one from whose beauty and gracefulness his soul derived its animation and inspiration.

It is no uncommon thing for young persons, at certain seasons and in certain frames of mind, to look with peculiar complacency and poetical feeling upon cottages. And if the cottages be romantically situated, in a dark embowering lane, or at the edge of an uninclosed and goose-besprinkled green, then the sight is very picturesque, and the associations which they excite are as much like reality, as Lord Byron's Corsair is like the beings it professes to pourtray. In his solitary ramble, Frederick Stratton strolled towards a green which was ornamented with several of these picturesque little cottages, and

for a while he stood as one entranced gazing upon the scene. A multitude of thoughts rushed into his mind; recollections and anticipations were blended together in pleasing confusion; and while he thought of the follies of the days that were gone, he thought of the wisdom of those which were to come. A green reminded him of the days when he had wandered along with the gypsies, and he penitently but not at all painfully recalled those days; for he was conscious that what he had done was in the simplicity of his heart, and with all integrity of spirit. Moreover, he thought on the peacefulness of the cottager's life, and the purity of those humble abodes, far from the demoralizing influences of large, opulent, and miserable cities. And while he was so indulging himself in pleasing speculations and meaningless meditations, the shrill shrieking of a female voice caught his ear, and he thought that the sound seemed to come from a cottage near which he was standing. He listened and heard it again,

and then he thought not so favourably of cottages and cottagers; for there came to his recollection some rude scenes of rustic brutality to which he had been witness in his youthful days. For he had heard and seen various illustrations of the unwelcome truth, that the passions and ill humours of mankind can and do develope themselves as much in rural retirement as in the more populous and busy haunts of men. At the sound of a female voice, uttering the inarticulate and wild expressions of distress, his chivalrous spirit was excited, and he rushed unceremoniously into the hovel from whence the voice proceeded. There was he disappointed and alarmed in finding that there was no need of his arm to rescue one from persecution, but of his best and kindest attentions to alleviate a most distressing agony of spirit.

On a miserable and shapeless bedstead lay a man apparently in convulsions, with his features hideously distorted, as if by a recent attack of paralysis, and on one side of the bed stood a

woman not beyond the middle of life, and exhibiting, as much as the agony of her grief would allow, a degree of personal beauty and general neatness not often seen in such abodes. She was wringing her hands, and sobbing most piteously, nor was she apparently sensible that a stranger had entered the cottage. From the sick man and the distressed woman, who were the first objects that attracted Frederick's attention, it was manifest that he could gain no information, but there were also in the room two others from whom he could. These two were Amelia Brownlow and her mother.

The elder lady immediately addressed herself to Frederick, saying, "Oh, Mr. Stratton, I am glad to see you here. What can be done for these poor people? It is a most distressing scene."

At hearing the name of Stratton, the sufferer turned his eyes and attempted to speak, but the effort was in vain. Frederick seeing that movement, gave the closest attention possible

to the ill-articulated sounds which came from the poor man's lips, but it was not possible, with all his efforts, to form any idea whatever of the meaning of those sounds.

"Shall I fetch some medical assistance?" asked Frederick, addressing himself to Mrs. Brownlow.

"I have sent already," said Mrs. Brownlow, "but I fear it will be to no purpose."

"He knows you again," said Amelia to Frederick Stratton.

"Knows me?" asked Frederick. Why, have I seen him before? Who is he?"

"You saw him at St. Alban's, Sir," replied the young lady.

Then Frederick recollected that the miserable object before him was that same Williams who had met him and solicited charity in the Abbey church. But the poor man's features were lamentably distorted, so as to render a recognition of them not very easy at first sight. And when Frederick thought of days that were gone by,

he sighed and shuddered; and stooping to the bed, he took hold of the sick man's hand, which lay insensibly and feebly by his side, and said, "Mr. Williams, can you hear and understand me if I speak?"

The poor man, by means of great and apparently painful effort, made signs and sounds indicative of assent.

"Can I be of service to you in sending to inform any one of your illness?"

The sufferer made no attempt to reply, but he wept bitterly and copiously. Frederick then addressed the woman, and said, "Can you tell me anything that can be said or done for the comfort and assistance of this poor man?"

"Oh, Sir," answered the woman, sobbing bitterly as she spoke, "he will never be happy again in this world."

"Is there anything that is burdensome to his mind?"

"Every thing, Sir," replied the woman, "is

burdensome to him ;" and then she wept more bitterly than before.

"You are related to him, I suppose ?" said Frederick.

At this question the poor woman covered her face, and said, "Oh no, Sir, no, Sir, don't ask me, don't ask me."

This exclamation, and the recollection of Williams's professed principles, or avowed lack of principle, explained the situation abundantly.

Soon after this the medical gentleman who had been sent for made his appearance, and when Mrs. Brownlow had given such directions as were necessary for the purpose of providing for the sick man's comfort, the two ladies prepared to take their departure ; and after Frederick Stratton had told the poor woman that every thing which could be done for their benefit would be done by himself or Mr. Brownlow, he joined the ladies in their walk homewards.

Such a scene as that which they had been

witnessing, was not likely soon or immediately to pass away from their minds. They therefore, very naturally, made it the topic of their conversation.

"I little thought," said Amelia, "so soon to see that poor man again, and in such a miserable condition. From his appearance, I thought he had been a gentleman."

"He was once," answered Frederick, "and might have remained so, or indeed might have improved his circumstances and have raised himself in society; but instead of applying himself to any profession, or making a good use of his faculties and talents, he carelessly dissipated the property which he possessed, and by general indolence and indulgence rendered himself incompetent to do anything to retrieve his affairs."

"You knew him, Sir," replied Amelia, "in his better days?"

"I knew him," said Frederick, "in better circumstances than he is now. He was not in

absolute want when I was acquainted with him. I have been acquainted with many strange characters, or at least, with many that you would consider strange: this man Williams, was one of them. I was very young when I became acquainted with him, and I thought very highly of him as a man of very superior mind. He entertained me with his humour, and as I fancied, he instructed me with his wisdom. He was particularly amusing in his declamations about common-place people, and had once very nearly persuaded me to believe that he and I were the only persons in the world who had any real understanding, and that all the rest of the world were absolute blockheads. I afterwards met with many others who were of the same opinion respecting themselves, and I began then to suspect that the world might be wiser than I had given it credit for being, or that I was not quite so superior to the rest of mankind as I had imagined myself to be."

Amelia smiled at this avowal, and said "I

dare say, that as your acquaintance with society increased, you found your case by no means singular. I have often been amused at the parties at Mr. Riddleton's to see specimens of the same kind."

"There would be no evil in this," said Frederick, "if it merely terminated, as in many cases, in a little juvenile vanity and conceit; but often it leads, as in the case of this man Williams, to gross immorality, and to the total ruin of character and happiness. And it does seem surprising, that men of acute minds, and possessed of respectable power of thinking, should not be able to see the natural and inevitable consequences of immoral and intemperate habits."

"This is an abundant proof," said Amelia, "of the necessity of those moral and religious restraints which they profess to despise; for if the wisdom and superior understanding of these men be not sufficiently powerful to govern and guide them, how can it be expected that less intelligent

discerning minds should have the means of keeping themselves in wholesome subjection?"

"It is, indeed," replied Frederick, "a humiliating fact, that mankind, who seem to love themselves most heartily and sincerely, and who know what is good for themselves, will not pursue that line of conduct which they are satisfied must be productive of the greatest sum of happiness. But men do not act upon calculation, they are governed by impulses."

"Therefore," replied Amelia, "it is necessary that the impulse to action should be of a moral nature. And is it not, Sir, very worthy of remark, that those persons who have discernment enough to see how decidedly men are ruled by impulses, should yet, in spite of this conviction, affect to place the ground of morals in mere calculation?"

"There are difficulties and perplexities on every view of the subject of human nature, and its motives and principles."

This reply from Frederick Stratton was a

proof that the dogmatism of his spirit was fast abating, and that he had learned more from conversing with other minds, than he had from a meditation in his own unassisted thoughts. He had seen that humanity was not so pliable to the wishes and crotchets of an individual, as he had imagined it would be. It was well for him that he had not conversed merely with books, but that he had given his attention and observation to men living in the world, and moving and acting about him. It would have been very easy for him to have written many books, proving to demonstration what man ought to be, and how he ought to act in every possible contingency of being; and then, perhaps, he would have wondered why the world would not buy and read his books, and he would have wondered how it could possibly come to pass, that such as read his theories and demonstrations, should not be a whit better and wiser after reading them, than they had been before. From thence he might have drawn conclusions very

discreditable to the world, or very mortifying to himself; and then, because he could not have every thing his own way, he might have been disgusted with the world, and have thought or said, that there was nothing worth living for. But he had fortunately been placed in circumstances which gave him an opportunity of seeing and conversing with real beings, and of learning from actual observation the elements of human nature. For it is with moral as it is with political economy, there are some of its votaries who are speculative men, and some who are practical. Frederick had commenced his career as a theoretical man, but he had been thrown into circumstances which led him to view these matters practically, and he was not a little pained at the indifference which his own parents had shown to the institutions of society.

If there be any one circumstance which more powerfully than another influences and acts upon the mind of a young man, situated as Frederick Stratton, it is undoubtedly the in-

fluence of female loveliness and good sense. It was clear to him, that in the mind and manners of Amelia there was all that was delightful and agreeable; and those good qualities which were obvious and visible, were so truly good and excellent, that he could not imagine the possibility of any others existing in the same person, which were not also good and excellent. He saw that she was beautiful and lovely, and that she had been habituated to reflection and thought; and he concluded that every thought of her mind, and every determination of her will, was in exact accordance with the principles of truth and beauty.

CHAPTER XXI.

When the party at Mr. Brownlow's had just finished their dinner, a messenger arrived from the medical attendant, to announce that the poor man had breathed his last. The information, though it might very naturally have been expected, gave a damp to the spirits of those who had just seen the dying man; and more especially did it produce a painful effect upon the mind of Frederick. Nor was the manner in which Mr. Mortimer was pleased to express himself upon this occasion at all calculated to raise that gentleman in the esteem of Frederick or of any one else; for when Mr. Brownlow had said, addressing himself to Frederick Strat-

ton, "I pitied the poor man when I saw him at St. Alban's, he had manifestly suffered much agony of spirit, and gave most painful symptoms of a deep-felt humiliation;" Mr. Mortimer very carelessly asked, "Who was this man you are talking about, Brownlow?"

In answer to the inquiry, Mr. Brownlow briefly narrated what he had heard from Frederick Stratton. "Ah!" replied Mr. Mortimer, with an air of arrogance, and an expression of contempt, "I hate those geniuses; they never come to any good end."

"For that," said Mr. Brownlow, "they are rather to be pitied."

"Oh, I have no pity for them," answered Mr. Mortimer; "they are always disturbing the peace of society by some foolish nonsense; they are all revolutionists and republicans in their hearts. France was ruined by them, and so will England be, if they are not carefully looked after."

"You are paying but a poor compliment to

the quiet members of society, by saying that all the men of genius are republicans and revolutionists in their heart," answered Mr. Brownlow; "you are virtually giving the intellect all to the wrong side."

"No, no," responded Mr. Mortimer; "I do not exactly mean that, you know; I merely mean, that in consequence of the great facility afforded for the instruction of all classes, that low people become so conceited, and such arrogant upstarts, that they think themselves quite equal to their superiors, and so become impatient of authority and government, and want to do away with all manner of law, and order, and every thing of the kind."

With a gentle smile, Frederick Stratton replied to the hater of genius, "It is certainly an error in any man to think himself equal to his superiors."

"Sir?" said Mr. Mortimer, rather pettishly, for he felt that he appeared somewhat absurd.

"I say," replied Frederick, "that a man is

in an error who thinks himself equal to his superiors; but I do not see that this feeling essentially leads to republicanism. A man may also be a reformer without being a republican."

"I don't believe it," answered Mr. Mortimer; "they are all radicals and republicans to a man, and they would cut all our throats if they could; nothing but the law prevents them."

"It is a happy thing for us," said Mr. Brownlow, "that they pay so much respect to the law as not to cut our throats."

"Ay, Sir," said Mr. Mortimer, who had the wit to see that Mr. Brownlow was laughing at him, "you may treat the matter as lightly as you please; but look at France, Sir, look at France; that country will show you what revolution is. I hope and trust that Old England will never follow that example; we must keep the reformers down, Sir, and then we have nothing to fear."

Some ladies think that politics are not a fit

subject for their discussion and amusement: Mrs. Brownlow and her daughter were of that number, and not professing to understand politics, nor apprehending that their understanding on that or any other topic would be much enlarged or enlightened by Mr. Mortimer, they were not unwilling to take their leave of the party.

The discussion was still continued by the young squire, who had no slight suspicion that Frederick Stratton himself was very nearly, if not altogether, one of those abhorred animals called men of genius. Farthermore, Mr. Mortimer miscalculated his own moral and intellectual powers, thinking, that as his own immediate neighbours and dependents paid him homage and attention on account of his wealth, that therefore he should be as impressive and majestic everywhere and to every body. He had been much in the habit of visiting Mr. Brownlow, from whom, though he had not received any actual or palpable homage, yet he

had never experienced any direct opposition or contradiction; and one reason why Mr. Brownlow had not opposed or contradicted him, was of a nature unintelligible to the young gentleman, and by no means flattering to him. The reason was, that Mr. Brownlow did not think him worth the trouble. The difference between the understanding of the two was very great. This the young man did not perceive, and he was mightily well pleased, in his familiar and condescending way, to address Mr. Brownlow by his surname only. Agreeable he never could become to any one, but by habit he was less intolerable than he had been on first acquaintance. Many were the hints that he might have taken, but his capacity for that species of instruction was very limited and confined. There was one circumstance which preserved him being intentionally rude and disagreeable to Mr. Brownlow, and that one circumstance was, that he was looking forward to the formation of an alliance with Mr. Brownlow's niece; but care-

ful as he might be to behave with tolerable propriety towards Mr. Brownlow, he was by no means heedful of his manners towards Mr. Brownlow's friends, especially when he suspected that these friends were not persons of property or of any great consequence. He mistook, however, the effect and power of his own behaviour, and while he thought that he was overwhelming by his magnificence of manner, he was merely ridiculous by his absurd and empty pomposity.

Now it should be here related, that while Frederick Stratton was taking his morning's ramble, Mr. Mortimer was occupying himself and Mr. Brownlow in a much more important manner, by proposing to make an offer of his hand and fortune to Amelia Brownlow. That proposal Mr. Brownlow listened to with great attention, and replied to with great readiness and composure. He merely said, in answer to Mr. Mortimer's long and lame speech, which all the dexterity of a reporter could never mould into

elegance or consistency, "Mr. Mortimer, I leave these matters entirely to my niece's own discretion. I hold a power of refusal, but I am not willing to exercise it capriciously. I am honoured by your confidence, but you must speak to the young woman for yourself."

Mr. Mortimer interpreted these words to mean that Mr. Brownlow gave his consent and approbation to the proposed union; but perhaps that was taking rather too much for granted, seeing that the fact was that Mr. Brownlow had not the slightest idea that Amelia would for a moment listen to the young gentleman's proposals. This had given the squire mighty confidence and satisfaction, and he was for a while more than usually lively and eloquent. His satisfaction was not, however, without alloy. He was very much annoyed by the presence and the conversation of Frederick Stratton. The consequential squire and possible high sheriff was not satisfied with himself so thoroughly as he had wished and been accustomed

to; for he was seriously disappointed in finding that, instead of impressing Frederick with a sense of humility, he himself had that awkward and unpleasant feeling, and he felt thoroughly humbled and mortified because he had failed in his attempt to humble and mortify another. That is indeed a bitter and severe mortification, which thus results from a bold and confident attempt to mortify another. From this there sprung up in the mind of Mr. Mortimer a feeling of hatred and malevolence towards Frederick Stratton, and that feeling was destined to have its climax and full development when it should be discovered that Frederick was likely to rival him in the affections of Amelia Brownlow.

Happy is it for the human race that their calamities come upon them, for the most part, gradually; they are by degrees let down from the pinnacle of their hopes, and it is by degrees that the rock of their confidence crumbles away from beneath them. Perhaps even some of those calamities which are said to come upon

them suddenly are more gradual in their approach than is generally acknowledged. There are many warnings, and indications, and intimations, to which no heed is given, and it is the blindness of mortals which makes their calamities seem to come upon them suddenly. Even as a falling house, though its actual rushing to the earth is a momentary movement, yet gives warning beforehand that its foundation is insecure, and that its walls are tottering.

From the very first moment that Mr. Mortimer set his eyes upon Frederick Stratton, there was something in the look and easy frankness of the young man's manners that by no means was agreeable to the squire. It had been very injurious to Mr. Mortimer, that he had always kept himself confined so much to the country. He had done so, because in the country he had enjoyed so strong a sense of his own greatness. Once or twice, when for a short season he had visited London for the purpose of enjoying its reputed pleasures and

amusements, he had experienced so mortifying a sense of his own absolute littleness and comparative nothingness, that he was very shy of repeating the experiment: and now, when he found himself, even in his own region, shrinking before one who, he imagined, would shrink before him, his spirit, if spirit he had, was deeply mortified.

For the rest of the time that the gentlemen remained in the dining-room, Mr. Mortimer was silent and sulky; and not being able to enjoy the pleasures of manifest and high consideration, palpable and immediate, he sat ruminating upon his four carriage-horses, and anticipating the splendid appearance which his equipage would make at the assizes, when the four fine horses should draw his new fine carriage, and his tenants and others should wear his livery, and look gorgeous in the eyes of the rustics. But not only were his meditations concerning his own greatness, he also thought upon revenging himself on Frederick Stratton, and

he had hopes of mortifying the young man, for the mortification which had been felt on his account.

It sometimes happens that the anticipations which man forms in the ardour of his wishes and desires, are frustrated most painfully by the event; and it sometimes also happens, that what they scarcely dared to hope, however they might wish and desire it, suddenly and most unexpectedly comes to pass: but there is also another condition in which human hopes and wishes are sometimes placed, and that is when there suddenly springs up an apparently prosperous event, giving unexpected promise of gratification, while that very promising event is preparing for the total destruction of all the fine fabric of our airy hopes. Such an event took place as soon as the gentleman had joined the ladies in the dining-room.

Drawing-rooms in the country are not by any means like drawing-rooms in London. The

former are generally, when used at all, lamentably full, so that there is scarcely room to breathe much less to yawn; but a drawing-room in the country, in the house of so quiet a man as Mr. Brownlow, gives ample room for yawning, and frequently ample occasion for it. So the party seemed to feel on the present occasion. Mr. Mortimer, though he was anticipating the honour of being sheriff of the county, and of sporting four magnificent horses upon the occasion, and giving most splendid liveries; and though he was looking forward with hope and confidence to the honour of the hand of a lady who passed for the most beautiful and accomplished in the whole neighbourhood, yet, nevertheless, felt himself by no means happy or at his ease. Amelia never was much at her ease when Mr. Mortimer was lounging and yawning fantastically about the room. Frederick was thinking of his unfortunate acquaintance, and of the melancholy termination of the poor man's life;

and when the three young persons were so dull, it was not to be expected that the two elder ones should be very animated.

Pleasantly and perplexingly was the stillness of the scene disturbed by the arrival of Mr. Riddleton. To this gentleman's company Mr. Brownlow was not particularly partial, but it was now not altogether unwelcome as a little relief. Mr. Riddleton was too profound a politician to go straight forward in any of his negotiations; he first inquired of the servant if Mr. Brownlow were at home and disengaged, and who was with him; and when informed of this fact, he desired that Mr. Brownlow should be informed as quietly as possible that a gentleman wished to speak with him in private. All this was attended to most carefully on the part of the domestic, and Mr. Riddleton soon had the happiness to find himself seated side by side with his worthy relative and brother guardian. Then Mr. Riddleton rubbed his hands, which ceremony he never omitted on occasions of great

moment and importance,—nay, sometimes he has been known to perform the same ceremony on very trifling occasions.

"Cousin," said the careful guardian, "is Amelia with you still?"

"Certainly she is," replied Mr. Brownlow; "it was but the other day that you brought her: you had not any apprehensions of her having eloped with the Unknown?"

"I—I—I don't know, I don't know, cousin: such things have been, and you know we cannot be too careful. We have a very serious charge, and I should never forgive myself, if by any neglect on my part any harm should come to the child."

"There is no danger of your neglecting your charge, and I hope I shall take care also and prevent any such catastrophe."

"Yes, yes, cousin," said Riddleton; "I have no doubt whatever of your inclination and will to take all proper care, but there are dangers which you may not be able to guard against.

We ought to have all our eyes about us, cousin; ay, and our ears too."

To the last part of the sentence Mr. Riddleton gave a peculiar intimation, and accompanied it with a look which seemed to demand some remark or inquiry on the part of the hearer. The true and deep politician converses not only with his tongue, but says much with his eyes and his shoulders, by shrugging the latter, and winking the former.

Prompted by this mysterious indication on the part of his brother guardian, Mr. Brownlow said, "Ears, Mr. Riddleton! what are you alluding to? Have you heard any thing concerning Amelia?"

"Have you seen any thing?" said Mr. Riddleton, with a very strong emphasis.

"I have seen nothing to be alarmed at," replied Mr. Brownlow.

"Indeed!" answered the careful guardian: "well, I hope there is nothing to be alarmed at: but I am distrustful, cousin."

"So it seems," replied Mr. Brownlow; "but

I assure you I am quite in the dark as to the cause and ground of your suspicions."

"That is the very thing that I was afraid of, cousin. You are not—excuse me—but you are not quite so—what shall I call it—not quite so suspicious as you ought to be: perhaps I may be too much so. It may be a fault, but it is a fault on the right side."

"But what is it, my dear Sir, that you are now alluding to with respect to Amelia?"

Mr. Riddleton here fixed one of his most penetrating looks on Mr. Brownlow, and said, "Now, cousin, I will ask you one very plain question, which you can answer if you will."

The politic guardian, who seemed to have a strong objection to hastening the development of his suspicions, did not proceed to ask the threatened question, till Mr. Brownlow's impatience urged him to say, "And what is the question which you are desirous of asking? I am ready to answer it, according to the best of my information."

"The question, then," said Mr. Riddleton, "is this: Is there not at this time under your roof an individual who regards our ward Amelia with affection? in short, is there not a young gentleman absolutely paying his addresses to her?"

Mr. Brownlow smiled, and said, "It is very true, that there is such a person now in the house, and that he has this day made proposals to me on the subject."

Mr. Riddleton started with astonishment, and said, "Bless me, cousin! how coolly you seem to regard the matter! You have not given your consent, of course?"

"I am not very desirous of exercising any control over Amelia's affections; and if she is disposed to accept the offer, I cannot think of objecting to it; though I hardly suppose she will accept it."

"Why, cousin, how you do talk! I wonder where you acquired such notions! You say you are not desirous of exercising any control

over Amelia's affections! I should like to know what is the use of a guardian, if he is not to have control over his ward's affections. A guardian, cousin, is in the place of a parent, *in loco parentis:* excuse my quoting Latin, I learn that habit at my *conversaziones.*"

"That may be very true," answered Mr. Brownlow; "a guardian is as a parent; but it does not follow that a guardian has nothing else to do than to control or oppose his ward's affections. But pray how is it that you should have heard any thing of this matter; for it was but this very morning that the gentleman said a word to me on the subject?"

Mr. Riddleton was pleased with this involuntary compliment to his penetration and sagacity, and replied, with a smile of self-importance, "Ah, cousin, you see I have information of every thing that is going on. There is no such thing as eluding my vigilance. You were surprised at seeing me bring Amelia back to you, a day or two ago: you hardly gave

me credit then for well-founded apprehensions; and to say truth, I must acknowledge that I was hardly aware that I was bringing the poor thing into the way of danger. But I hope I have found it out in time; and though you have given your consent, there is another which is necessary, and that is mine."

"I think," said Mr. Brownlow, "there is yet another, which is far more to the purpose —and that is the consent of Amelia herself."

"Young ladies, cousin," answered Mr. Riddleton, "are not very slow in giving their consent to arrangements and proposals of this nature."

"Indeed, Mr. Riddleton," replied the guardian, "you are very much in an error concerning young ladies. They are not, in general, quite so weak as you take them to be. And as for Amelia, I do not believe that the most splendid establishment that could be offered, would induce her to marry a simpleton."

"It may be so, cousin," answered Mr. Rid-

dleton, "but in the present case there is neither a simpleton nor a splendid establishment in the way."

"To my mind," said Mr. Brownlow, "there is a simpleton, and, compared with Amelia's expectations, there is a tolerably splendid establishment."

"In the latter, cousin, I am sure you are wrong; and in the former you may be. I assure you he is altogether an impostor. So far from having a splendid establishment, or a large fortune, he is totally penniless."

Mr. Brownlow, in full confidence of his own knowledge of Mr. Mortimer's large property, replied, "That is a very recent and wonderful change, then. It is but this very week that the gentleman purchased four carriage-horses, which he intends to use when he is made high-sheriff."

"Oh, cousin, cousin, how you do suffer yourself to be imposed upon!—What use can he have for carriage-horses?"

"He has used carriages-horses ever since he came to his estate, as I know, for a certainty," answered Mr. Brownlow: "besides, every one in this neighbourhood has known Mr. Mortimer's family as a family of great wealth,—I say nothing for their wit."

A change came over the countenance of Mr. Riddleton, and he exclaimed almost in raptures, "Mortimer, did you say, cousin? Bless me! why you don't mean to say that Mr. Mortimer has made an offer to Amelia?"

"But I do mean to say so, and I do say so, and I am very much of opinion that Amelia is not at all inclined to become Mrs. Mortimer."

"Then, cousin, there is indeed a simpleton in the case; a very great simpleton must Amelia be to refuse such an offer as this. Why Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer is of one of the oldest families in the kingdom."

"Families," said Mr. Brownlow, "may be

too old, and I am inclined to think so of the family of the Mortimers, if the present representative be a fair specimen of it."

"Ah, but, cousin, there is something so venerable in an old family, so very congenial to one's feelings. I wish you would come to some of my *conversaziones*, you would hear Silversides discuss the subject of ancestry with such ingenuity and eloquence, proving how valuable it is to come of an ancient family,—in a poetical point of view, I think he calls it; I don't exactly understand what he means, but he is so wonderfully convincing. And it is very candid of him, because he himself is not of a very high family. I believe he was put apprentice from St. Giles's workhouse to a butcher in Carnaby market; but he was always so clever, that he soon took a higher station."

Mr. Brownlow thought that it was possible that Mr. Silversides might extol ancestry to gratify the owners of great-grandfathers; but

not heeding the opinions of Mr. Sivlersides, he pursued the discourse with Mr. Riddleton concerning the proposal which had been made to Amelia. "Then you did not know that it was Mr. Mortimer that was making proposals for our ward?"

"I did not indeed, cousin; for if I had known it, I should most undoubtedly have given my warmest approbation. No, no, I thought of quite another person. I hope, however, that now an offer has been made from such a respectable quarter, that it will be accepted;—of course, I shall be consulted. And then, cousin, when we see our ward so respectably and handsomely settled, how pleasing will be our reflections, and how delightful will be the consciousness that we have rightly discharged our duty, and have faithfully executed the trust committed to us."

Thereupon Mr. Riddleton again rubbed his hands and looked wiser than ever, and thought himself one of the best of all possible guardians,

because his ward had received an offer from a wealthy simpleton.

"But, cousin," continued Mr. Riddleton, "I had been informed, and I thought from a quarter likely to know, that a young man named Stratton had been making inquiries concerning my ward, and that he was now visiting at your house. I had, indeed, heard so, cousin."

"And you heard rightly, so far as concerns the young gentleman's being here on a visit."

Mr. Riddleton was again uneasy, and said, "Then, cousin, the sooner that Amelia is married to Mr. Mortimer, the better; that Stratton is a mere fortune-hunter."

"I believe," said Mr. Brownlow, with much indifference of manner, "that he has not any great expectations; but he is too honourable a man to deserve the character which you give of him. If he should ever be fortunate enough to obtain a handsome property by marriage, I shall be glad of it."

Mr. Riddleton shook his head, and the con-

ference terminated by his consent to be introduced to the party. He could not but pity the ignorance and simplicity of his cousin Brownlow, all which he attributed to his perverse love of a country life. Mr. Riddleton could not imagine how any one could know any thing at all without residing in London, and attending *conversaziones*.

CHAPTER XXII.

When Mr. Mortimer found that he was in company with the two guardians of Amelia, he forthwith put on his finest airs, and they did not recommend him much to the attention and approbation of the rest of the party, though they might be imposing upon Mr. Riddleton. At the introduction, Mr. Mortimer made one of his best bows, and Mr. Riddleton, who had not been accustomed to such low bows in his crowded rooms, thought the said bow exceedingly graceful, and savouring much of the chivalry of the old school.

In order to convey to the careful guardian a sense of his own greatness, Mr. Mortimer be-

gan to discourse upon such topics as indicated the speaker to be possessed of great wealth. "A pleasant time of year for the country; but indeed all seasons are pleasant in the country, where a man pays attention to his own estate."

"The country," said Mr. Riddleton, "is very pleasant now and then; but I must say that I prefer a town life; you meet with so much society in town."

"True," said Mr. Mortimer, who was not reluctant to coincide with the young lady's guardian: "London is a delightful place; I have sometimes thought of taking a house in town; but I should not like a confined street, nor a small house. If there was a house to be had in St. James's or Grosvenor-square, I think I might be tempted."

"They are very expensive houses," answered Mr. Riddleton.

"Yes, I know it," said the man of ancient family, in a manner which indicated that the expense would be no object to him.

If, after this, Mr. Riddleton did not think most magnificently of Mr. Mortimer, it was not that young gentleman's fault.

"I have often heard, Mr. Riddleton," continued the great man, "of the fame of your *conversaziones;* now that is a sort of thing that I have never attended."

"I should be most happy to see you at one," said Mr. Riddleton.

"Why, yes," drawled Mr. Mortimer, "there is something pleasant in meeting people of intellect, and persons of distinction, and knowing what is going on in the world without the trouble of reading. That reading is a great bore."

"But all the world reads now-a-days," said Mr. Riddleton.

"That's the worst of it," replied Mr. Mortimer; "there is too much of that going on. I cannot imagine how gentlemen of family and distinction can think of encouraging the absurd system of general education. Ten years hence, where are we to look for servants?"

"Very true, Sir, indeed, very true," answered the lover of *conversaziones;* "I often think of that myself. Yet Government, without making any direct opposition so as to alarm the people, does all it can to check the evil; for it throws every impediment in the way of diffusing knowledge. It lays a heavy duty upon paper, it taxes the newspapers with a stamp that costs more than the paper is worth, and it lays a duty again upon those advertisements by which books are announced to the public. Besides all this, there are the laws concerning copyright, and a multitude of other obstacles and impediments, in spite of all which, books continue to be circulated and read among all classes."

"The diffusion of knowledge," interrupted Mr. Brownlow, "is a fashion. The lower classes imitate the higher."

"Exactly so," responded Mr. Mortimer; "there lies the evil. Now, if the higher classes would consult their own dignity and respectability, they ought to give up all that sort of

thing, and leave off reading, and then there might be a proper distinction again."

"But," said Mr. Brownlow, "would there not be danger that the lower classes might again fall to imitating the higher, and in the course of time become as ignorant as their betters?"

"Alack, cousin," said Mr. Riddleton, "there seems to be no means whatever of preserving the distinctions between the two classes. There will continually be encroachments and invasions on the part of the vulgar."

"But I cannot see," said Frederick Stratton, "any great use in keeping up the distinction at all by any artificial means. If Nature has made a distinction, that distinction must, and will be preserved; nothing of art can obliterate it. You may teach animals many curious and wonderful tricks; but irrational they are by nature, and irrational in spite of art they must still remain. A man may discipline a pig, so as to make it what is called a learned pig; but

the animal is still a pig, and still irrational. Nature preserves her principle of exclusiveness most perfect and entire; and if art cannot obliterate a natural distinction, art cannot form an unalterable distinction."

Mr. Mortimer would not listen to Frederick, and of course made him no answer; but Mr. Riddleton, who was prodigiously fond of discussion and dissertation, screwed up his lips, and looked as wise as one of Gotham, saying, "Why, Sir, you will excuse me, but it appears to me that there always has been something of a distinction in civilized society, and therefore I am humbly of opinion that that distinction is founded in nature. Besides, Sir, it is natural—you know, you understand me—it is, as I may say, founded in the nature of things; for if there were no distinction, no classes, that is, no variety, we should be all equal; and that, Sir, you know, is what none but a leveller, and a jacobin republican radical would desire. Don't you see, Sir?"

Frederick heard, indeed, but he did not see; and though he had attended most respectfully to Mr. Riddleton's harangue, he was not able to answer it, or even to reply to it. But fortunately Mr. Mortimer had listened, and was both able and willing to reply, which he did by saying, "I am decidedly of your opinion, Sir; those are the sound constitutional notions in which I have been educated: I have uniformly professed them; and so long as they are the ruling principles of England's policy, she must be a great nation. I hope I shall always lift up my voice against all innovation. The only way to keep us what we are now, is not to make any changes."

Frederick Stratton assented to this last proposition, so did Amelia and her mother, and Mr. Brownlow, and so also did Mr. Riddleton, who was the only person that expressed his assent.

"Your notions, Sir," said the suspicious and vigilant guardian of Amelia, "are perfectly

sound and correct; and, in these days, when so many dangerous and destructive opinions are afloat, it is some consolation to find a young man of illustrious family adhering to the good old principles which have been the means of raising England to her present glory and high position in the scale of nations."

To such a fine speech there could be no other reply than a courteous bow on the part of him who was the subject of it; that bow was accordingly made by Mr. Mortimer, and acknowledged by Mr. Riddleton. Then did the careful guardian mightily approve of the young squire as a fit and proper suitor for Miss Amelia Brownlow; and very great was the homage which Mr. Riddleton paid to Mr. Mortimer, and almost as great was the homage which Mr. Mortimer did pay to Mr. Riddleton.

But while the conversation concerning the beauties of distinction in society was passing between these two gentlemen, Frederick was as attentively as he could, without manifest

rudeness, watching the countenance of Amelia, to observe in what manner she regarded these enunciations of the notions of her guardian, and the principles of her lover. The indications were by no means flattering to the parties, for more than once were to be seen on the young lady's features slight smiles, that savoured more of ridicule than approbation.

When two in a small party are talking oracularly, after the manner of Mr. Riddleton and Mr. Mortimer, it is not very unusual for the rest, if they are at all attending to the speakers, to convey to each other, by means of looks, their opinion of the notions or arguments of the speakers. On this occasion, it happened that Mr. Brownlow and his niece were engaged in this kind of communication, and more than once did Mr. Brownlow direct his looks to Frederick Stratton, and thus he seemed to be taken into their party. But whether it was that Frederick did not know how to use that kind of conversation, or whether his thoughts were too much

occupied with other matters more interesting, he did certainly convey by his looks towards Amelia the idea that he was thinking more of her beauty than of their wit. And while he was thus delightfully amused, he was suddenly recalled to his recollection by observing a rising blush, and a slight expression of seriousness on the countenance of Amelia Brownlow. He was thus informed that his attentions had not been unobserved, but he was not sufficiently skilful to know whether in those looks was an expression of approbation or of disapprobation; but, whatever the looks expressed, or were intended to express, they contributed to make the young man more effectually a captive.

It was well for Mr. Mortimer and Mr. Riddleton that they were otherwise engaged, or they would both have seen in the looks of the young lady that which would have been displeasing to them. But the satisfaction and delight of the young squire Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer were so great at having met

in Mr. Riddleton a kindred spirit, that the fit of moroseness with which he had been seized a short time before he left the dining-room, was quite forgotten, and had passed away; and he was in high and towering expectation of carrying off in triumph his fair and lovely prize. As yet, however, not a word had been said to the young lady upon the subject either by Mr. Brownlow or by the enamoured squire of ancient family. Many loving looks had been directed to her before the arrival of Mr. Riddleton, and many clumsy efforts at wit had been made by Reginald Tracy; to these things, however, the young lady had long been accustomed, so long as not to heed them; and, as her thoughts were now more taken up with the seriousness and earnestness of Frederick Stratton, the Plantagenet was almost unheeded.

There was an evil in this very negligence unthought of by Amelia; for, as on many occasions, when the young Squire had annoyed her by his wit or his politeness, she had manifested

symptoms of impatience; so now, when having her thoughts otherwise directed and more pleasingly engaged, she was heedless of the annoyance, this very placid indifference, contrasted with her former impatience, appeared to Mr. Mortimer like a symptom of approbation.

Infinite as are the varieties of the human character, so, infinite are the modes in which the universal passion invades the mind and developes itself: that there was a wide difference between the passion as it existed in the mind of Mr. Mortimer, and in that of Frederick Stratton, may be very easily imagined. To the first, it was a matter of selfishness; to the other, it was a prompter to benevolent and generous thoughts. When a little mind loves one individual with distinct intensity, all its capacity for love is centered there with an absolute exclusiveness, and all others are disregarded, or even more than disregarded. But when a mind of higher tone and nobler character is by attraction of affection drawn to love, then is that love not the extinc-

tion of general kind regards,—rather is it a more intense and powerful centre, from whence a sentiment of benevolence more widely extends itself.

Thus differently affected were Mr. Mortimer and Frederick Stratton, and the less generous principle very soon displayed itself in the conversation and deportment of the former. Presuming on the power of wealth and high family to command assent to his proposals as soon as made, and inferring from obvious attentions so long paid, that the state of his heart was abundantly well known, and that his advances were acceptable, he began to address himself to Amelia rather with the confidence of an accepted lover, than with the humble reserve of a doubtful suitor. Lovers entertain the beloved one with such discourse, and such sentiments, as are entertaining to themselves, and they measure by their own feelings the sentiments of the other.

So thought Mr. Mortimer when, having by

dexterous contrivance detached Amelia from the rest of the party, he said in a low whisper, "Who is that Stratton that seems so great a favourite with your uncle?"

"He is almost a stranger to me," replied Amelia; "I believe my uncle met with him accidentally, and afterwards discovered that he was of a family living at Nettlethorpe."

Mr. Mortimer, at the word family, gave a contemptuous sneer, and said, "Family! Pray, what family? I never had the honour to hear of this family before."

Amelia made no reply, and the Plantagenet proceeded. "I never saw such a disagreeable coxcomb in my life; he has not the slightest approach to gentlemanly manners. Mr. Riddleton seems to be a perfect gentleman."

The young lady as soon as possible extricated herself from this pinioned colloquy, and threw off the encumbrance of the Squire's select attentions; but as Mr. Mortimer was disposed to exercise and indulge his conversational faculty,

he gave the whole party the advantage of his wisdom; and so interesting was he to himself in the honourableness of his high descent, in the splendour of his large estate, in the possession of four recently-purchased coach-horses, and in the anticipation of the office of sheriff, that he thought that all he might be willing to say, the party would be most willing to hear. Nor was he altogether wrong in his conjecture; for it is wisely arranged in a country like England, that riches should command esteem and respect; and when a rich man of high family is not a downright natural fool, or an obvious idiot, he is always heard with attention.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Much as Mr. Riddleton might be persuaded that it was a great and important part of the duty of a guardian to prevent his ward from falling in love, he could not but see that it was still more the duty of a guardian to procure if possible for his ward a husband of wealth and family. He therefore very readily gave his consent to the proposals made by Mr. Mortimer: so much in accordance with his own feelings were these proposals, that the vigilant guardian felt as much delighted with them, as if they had emanated from his own actual management, wisdom, and contrivance. And so heartily did he express his concurrence and approbation,

that the Plantagenet felt himself secure of the lovely prize.

Considering that Mr. Riddleton, by means of his *conversaziones,* and the wits and wiseacres there assembling, must have been pretty well imbued with knowledge of various kinds, it is surprising that, amongst the rest of his information, he had not learned how little to be calculated upon is the consent of a young lady to a match proposed by a parent or guardian. Thoughtless, however, of any possible objection or opposition, he proposed to Mr. Brownlow, in the fulness of his confidence, that he, Mr. Riddleton, should have the pleasure and happiness of making known to the young lady the high fortune and great blessings which awaited her; and Mr. Brownlow was by no means reluctant or unwilling to leave his brother guardian a task, which he himself felt not very desirable, and which he feared he should not execute with quite so much justice or liberality to Mr. Mortimer as Mr. Riddleton would.

In pursuance of this arrangement, Mr. Riddleton, the following morning, at breakfast, announced to his ward with a smile of mystery, that he must beg the favour of her company to a conference of great moment, at any hour, in the course of the morning, which might best suit the young lady. An early hour was appointed, and the high contracting parties met.

Mr. Riddleton was of all men living the most polite. With exquisitely graceful courtesy did he hand the lady to a seat, and with more bows than one or two did he take a seat beside her.

"I suppose, my dear ward," began the guardian, "that you are not aware of the nature of the business on which I am now about to speak to you?"

"That I certainly am not, Sir," answered Amelia, with great truth, and with semblance also of truth.

"Then I can assure you, my fair cousin,"

responded Mr. Riddleton, " that it is a matter of very great importance."

When he pronounced the word " importance," he looked very serious; and Amelia, with as great seriousness, replied, " Indeed, Sir !"

Any one but Mr. Riddleton would have been displeased with the cadence of that reply. It did not so much express admiration and excited curiosity, as it did resignation and indifference; for Amelia knew that her guardian was accustomed to regard and speak of every thing as a matter of importance, and that he could scarcely say " How do you do?" without prefatory circumlocution, or a circumlocutory preface. After some little more hesitation, and many preparatory hems, the worthy guardian proceeded.

" Human life, cousin, human life is full of changes and vicissitudes. We know not what is in store for us; but we ought always to be attentive and vigilant in the discharge of our duties: and I hope and trust —I speak it with

great diffidence, cousin—but I do say, that I hope and trust that I have discharged my duty to you, as your guardian, with fidelity and exactitude."

"Most undoubtedly, Sir," replied Amelia.

"The duties of a guardian, cousin," continued Mr. Riddleton, "are of a varied nature, and it is most incumbent upon us, who are deputed to that sacred trust, to think seriously of it; for I do think it may be very justly called a sacred trust. Now you, my cousin, you are approaching that time of life in which young persons begin to consider seriously of settling for life; and, as your guardian, I think it my bounden duty to give you such advice and exhortation as may contribute to assist you in making a proper choice."

Here the careful guardian made an abrupt and sudden pause, as expecting that the curiosity of the young lady was highly excited to know what might be the end of this note of preparation. But Amelia waited with great

patience, letting her guardian take his own time for the evolving of his own idea: so Mr. Riddleton was under the necessity of continuing.

"Is it not, cousin, fair and just that I, as your guardian, and as in place of a parent, *in loco parentis*, as the Latins have it; is it not fair and just that I should have the honour of consulting and deliberating upon the disposal of your hand? And may I not presume to give my advice and exhortation in assisting you to form a suitable choice?"

Amelia, who had not the slightest suspicion of the proposals which had been made by Mr. Mortimer, began to think that all this preface had reference to no other person than to Frederick Stratton. And forthwith, at this thought, there mounted to her cheeks a burning blush, which she felt most painfully, and which she endeavoured in vain to subdue. Every effort which she made for that purpose increased her perplexity, and completely explained to herself the state of her feelings,

as regarded that young gentleman. If, however, any thing had been wanting to make the interpretation complete, that was effected by the continuation of the discourse.

The lady, in answer to her careful guardian, said, "It hardly can be said, Sir, that in these matters we have a choice. We may be chosen, but we are not to choose."

"Clearly so, clearly so," replied Mr. Riddleton; "you are right. You have not to make a choice; except that you may choose whether or no you will accept an offer that is made to you."

Amelia, with a half-affected sigh, answered, "And sometimes our unfortunate sex is hardly allowed that privilege."

"Very true, cousin, very true," said Mr. Riddleton; "for sometimes young ladies would accept what is evil, and reject what is good. The judgment is not always so mature as to make a proper determination. Nevertheless, I discommend very heartily all compulsory in-

terference,—you understand me, cousin? I discommend all compulsory interference;—I think that parents and guardians should advise, consult, exhort, and persuade, and so forth: but I am not an advocate for compulsion; and, in the present case, I hope and trust that compulsion is not needed."

Amelia blushed most deeply; and if Mr. Riddleton had made use of his eyes and observation, he would have noticed it; but he was one of those whose eyes are so wide open that they see nothing. He continued his harangue.

"There needs no compulsion, my cousin, to urge you to accept the high and honourable offer that is now made you, by no less a personage than Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer, Esquire, a gentleman whose ancestry is as distinguished and illustrious as any of noble birth; and, indeed, I have reason to think that he is allied to nobility. And as there is no saying what changes and revolutions may

take place in that lapse of years, a time may come, cousin—a time may come, in which you may bear a title, and have a carriage with a coronet. There are several carriages with coronets which come to my house when we have our *conversaziones*, and I should not be prouder of any than of that which you one day may have the honour and happiness of bearing."

There Mr. Riddleton paused; but long before he paused, the blush was leaving Amelia's cheeks; and when he had finished, the blush had completely subsided. The young lady then was well aware of the state of her heart, and was not only sure that Mr. Mortimer did not possess it, but was well satisfied that another did.

As Mr. Riddleton had not observation enough to discover in Amelia's face symptoms of emotion and confusion, so neither did he discern in the tone of her voice any thing hostile to the hopes of Mr. Mortimer, when she said, "You

astonish me, Sir, when you speak of Mr. Mortimer having made proposals for me; it is far too great an honour for me; I cannot think of aspiring to so illustrious a connexion."

"Ay," said Mr. Riddleton, "I thought it would surprise you. You were not aware of the business on which I wished to speak to you. I do not wonder you are quite astonished; it certainly is a piece of good fortune which I did not anticipate."

"Nor I," said Amelia.

There was an accent, and there was a cadence in these words, which would have made them express to any one else a very different meaning from that which they conveyed to Mr. Riddleton. He was quite unobservant of the indifference with which the words were uttered; and because the young lady acknowledged herself to be surprised, and because he was himself surprised and delighted too, he took it for granted that her surprise must be of necessity accompanied with delight, and therefore he rea-

dily and hastily concluded that Amelia had most willingly accepted the proposal, and he thought that now nothing more remained for him than to announce to the enamoured and illustrious purchaser of the four beauitful carriage-horses, that these said horses might have the honour of drawing in a carriage the lovely ward of Mr. Riddleton, in the character of Mrs. Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer.

Rising from his seat with mighty formality and stateliness, Mr. Riddleton took his ward by the hand, and said, " Now, cousin, I have fulfilled my duty, and am most happy in having been honoured to convey to you the agreeable and important intelligence. I have now only to inform my brother guardian, and to say that you have received the information with surprise and delight."

" With surprise, you may say, Sir," answered Amelia.

" Oh, yes," said Mr. Riddleton, smiling—he did not often smile, for he was a grave man—" I

understand,—yes, I know; of course, I ought not to say so, but, however, it may be so understood, though not expressed."

"If it is so understood," answered Amelia, "I fear that there will be a misunderstanding; for, to say the truth, Sir, I am not so much delighted with the proposal as you may imagine."

Hereupon Amelia looked very grave, and Mr. Riddleton ten times graver. There are some people who are slow in understanding, and very tardy in apprehension; but when they do understand and apprehend, they understand as well as they that are quicker. Their understanding has a kind of near-sightedness; they do not see an object at a distance; but when they come close up to it, they see it very well; and the misfortune is, that from want of a more gradual and distant apprehension, the matter comes upon them with an overwhelming suddenness. So came the awful intelligence to Mr. Riddleton of the obstinacy of his ward, in rejecting what he thought the most desirable

proposal that could possibly be made. He let fall the hand which he had been holding, drew back several paces, and looked with theatrical astonishment at his insensate ward. Then he opened his eyes wider than ever, spread out his hand, and for a moment stood speechless, while his embarrassed ward sat with her face averted, one arm hanging over the back of the chair, and the hand of the other lightly pressed upon her forehead, and encroaching so much upon her eyes as to prevent her from seeing the fine tragedy attitude of Mr. Riddleton.

When the power of speech returned, which power was not at any time long suspended with that gentleman, he said, "Bless me, bless me! not delighted! Why, cousin, cousin, what can you be thinking of? To think of refusing the offer of Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer, Esquire, a gentleman of such high birth, next to nobility itself? Bless me, cousin, you astonish me!"

Now Mr. Riddleton was by no means a vio-

lent man nor a harsh man; he was upon no occasion prone to severity, and even his expostulations, pathetic as they may be in the reading, had not the advantage of impressiveness in their utterance, inasmuch as he spoke quick, and had a slender voice, generally pitched in a high key. But gentle and mild as the expostulation was rendered by the manner in which it was uttered, it was quite enough to distress and afflict Amelia. She made no reply,—she found it difficult to speak. She had a great regard for her kind-hearted guardian, and was sorry to offend or oppose him. There came also into her mind the recollection of the well-known saying of the great dramatist, "The course of true love never did run smooth." And she thought it peculiarly hard that, at this early period of her love, at its very first development, there should be such painful emotions excited. So she was perplexed and grieved, and, instead of speaking, she wept.

Then Mr. Riddleton's feelings were touched,

and again he took her by the hand, and said with much tenderness of manner, "Oh, cousin, I am sorry to see this. Bless me, cousin, now pray don't distress yourself; you hurt my feelings, indeed you do. You know I am not a harsh guardian; all I say is for your good, only for your good, cousin. Come, now, don't cry, pray don't. What will Mr. Mortimer say if he sees that you have been crying. I am sure Mr. Mortimer is a very nice man."

There are some young ladies who admire nice men, and who think that the highest compliment that they can pay to one of the ungentle sex is to call him a nice man: but Amelia was not of that way of thinking, and it was no recommendation to her that Mr. Riddleton thought Mr. Mortimer a nice man. In order, however, to save her guardian's feelings, she endeavoured to repress her emotion as much as possible; and gently wiping away the tears that had been shed, she replied to her anxious friend, "I am indeed sorry, Sir, that I cannot regard Mr.

Mortimer as you wish and desire; but you know that it is not in our power to command our affections. I am very much honoured by Mr. Mortimer having condescended so much as to make these proposals: but I hope that he will not take to heart his disappointment. Pray, Sir, do explain to him that I cannot—I cannot—You know Sir, what to say, much better than I can tell you."

Mr. Riddleton was flattered by the last sentence, and he was pleased that his diplomatic talents were acknowledged and appreciated by his ward. So does it not unfrequently happen that, in the midst of our troubles and calamities, there starts up some redeeming and alleviating circumstance, which renders the calamity less intolerable. And being pleased, Mr. Riddleton spoke still more kindly to the young lady, and said, "Well, my dear cousin, don't afflict yourself; I will not urge the matter any farther at present; perhaps you will think of it. You hardly know enough of Mr. Mortimer yet to

form a judgment of him; he has not had time to make himself agreeable to you."

"But he has had time enough to make himself disagreeable to me," said Amelia.

At this, Mr. Riddleton looked surprised, and said, "Indeed!" with a proper and becoming emphasis.

"He has been wearying me for a long time with his tiresome and ridiculous attentions."

Thereupon the guardian became angry with Mr. Mortimer for having taken the liberty to fall in love with the young lady without consulting her guardians. And the more angry did Mr. Riddleton feel, as his own vigilance had been, in some measure, eluded by the crafty Plantagenet; so Mr. Mortimer lost ground in the good opinion of Mr. Riddleton, who began a little to abate the earnestness with which, at first, he had taken up his cause; and instead of persevering in pressing the proposal, he spoke with more consolatory language to his ward, saying: "If that be the case, why then I have done.

But I cannot think what could induce my cousin Brownlow to allow these visits; I thought my cousin had been more circumspect. Well, my dear, come, dry your tears, and let us take a little walk together,—it is a beautiful morning. I am sorry, very sorry, that I have said any thing to give you pain."

And so the interview terminated; and Mr. Riddleton, though proud of his diplomatic powers, and though disappointed in his negotiation, was nevertheless not out of humour; for he regarded his ward with much tenderness of affection, and he had not the heart, or rather the want of heart, to think or speak with severity.

CHAPTER XXIV.

As the house of Mr. Brownlow was the residence of a gentleman not much addicted to field sports, there were within its walls abundant resources for the amusement and entertainment of himself and his guests. But Mr. Mortimer was a gentleman whom it was not very easy to amuse, and who found it not very easy to amuse himself. The day passed over his head very heavily when he was at home, and not less so when he was abroad; indeed, in his own residence, he could occasionally find something that bore the semblance of employment. He could walk about his garden, and give his orders, and suggest improvements; and he could talk with

servants who had the charge of his horses; and he could ask a great multitude of questions which he had asked before, and which, when answered, left him as wise as they found him.

It is easy, then, to imagine that a gentleman of such scanty resources in ordinary, should find himself more than usually hampered with the sluggish movements of the morning hours, when he was waiting in suspense to hear the result of a most momentous negotiation. The agitations of his mind had not indeed been quite of that tumultuous and distracting nature as might be imagined on such an occasion; for, in the first place, his mind was not capable of much emotion, or susceptible of very deep feeling; and in the second place, he was not quite so much in love with Amelia as he was with himself; and in the third place, he entertained not the slightest doubt of success. Calmness of mind may be exceedingly desirable to those who have it not; but it is not always so delightful to those who have it. That did Mr. Mortimer

find to be the case, and therefore, though his hours passed placidly, they passed wearily.

It had been left to Frederick Stratton again to entertain the possible high-sheriff; but Frederick took no great pains to relieve the young gentleman of the tediousness of the crawling hours, but suffered him to have recourse to his own ingenuity to give an impulse to the slow-paced minutes. Thus situated, Mr. Mortimer had the choice of amusements before him; whether he would walk up and down the library, or whether he would take down a book and look at the pictures, or whether he would look out of window, or whether he would sit still and say nothing, or whether he would condescend to commence a conversation with Frederick Stratton."

When there is a choice to be made, there is something to be done, and there is a little exercise of mind in making a choice; and, as Mr. Mortimer had but little to do, he made that little last as long as possible. After much de-

liberation, and many efforts to find more agreeable amusement, he addressed himself to Frederick, who was amusing himself with a magazine.

"I believe, Sir, you have resided in London occasionally?"

"I have, Sir," answered Frederick, with a little embarrassment, for he recollected much that he would willingly have forgotten.

"And, judging from the conversation that passed yesterday, I presume that you were acquainted with several literary people."

Frederick certainly had been acquainted with several that are called literary people: there was his friend Theodore Clarke, and there was Dr. Grimwood, and many others there were of minor note, whom at one time he regarded as the illuminators of the public mind, and as men fitted to govern kingdoms, or rather, to tell others how they should be governed, which is the easiest task of the two. But Frederick had experienced a revolution in his mind upon many

topics, and more especially on the topic of Theodore Clarke's and Dr. Grimwood's high intellectual dignity. He felt, therefore, no pleasure in being reminded of these associates, and he answered the inquiry shortly, and in a tone rather repelling than inviting farther inquiry. But Mr. Mortimer had an object in asking the questions, and therefore, heedless of the manner in which they had been answered, continued,

"And, among others, did you ever meet with a man named Williams?"

The recent melancholy scene which Frederick had witnessed rose in a moment before his mind and touched him, and he answered, with some feeling, "Williams? Yes, Sir, I did know one of that name."

"Indeed! Can you tell me what has become of him?"

"I can, Sir; the Williams that I knew is dead, recently and wretchedly."

Mr. Mortimer had not much heart, but what he had was moved not only at the fact related,

but at the manner in which Frederick related it; and he replied, with some feeling, "Poor man! I am sorry for him.—I asked you, Sir, because he went from this part of the country to London many years ago, when I was quite a child. He was a man of great talents, I have heard, but of very irregular conduct and singular opinions. There are very strange people in London."

Frederick assented to the last position, thinking also, but not saying, that there are many strange people in the country. Mr. Mortimer was silent for a few minutes and thoughtful, as if wishing to ask a few more questions concerning this man Williams. And Frederick, seeing that the questions were not, as he first imagined they were, intended as an insult or means of mortification to himself, was very ready to answer any interrogations that might be put to him on the subject, and rather invited than repelled curiosity, by saying, "I was acquainted with that poor man some few years ago, when

I looked up to him as a person of high acquirements, and, what is still more, of very superior mental powers. I never knew a man who talked so plausibly as he did, and yet his theories did not answer. I have learned one lesson from him, and a difficult one it is to learn, and, I may say, a painful one—I have learned that theory and practice are two different things."

"Yes," said Mr. Mortimer, "every body knows that."

Mr. Mortimer was right in one sense, but wrong in another; nor was he mightily polite in making such a speech.

"I may not have expressed myself correctly," replied Frederick, "there is another mode of expressing the same idea, which is also objectionable, viz. That that which is theoretically right, is practically wrong. I do not at all hold with this doctrine, but I do believe that we very often take that to be theoretically right which is not so. At all events,

I am indebted to this Williams for discovering the fallacy of many plausibilities."

Mr. Mortimer was not disposed to enter into a discussion as to appropriateness or inappropriateness of terms; he therefore went on with his inquiries. "And when and where did this poor man die?"

"Yesterday," said Frederick; "and in this neighbourhood."

Mr. Mortimer started, and was pale with astonishment. "Yesterday? In this neighbourhood? Was he the poor man alluded to by Mrs. Brownlow?"

"It is the same," answered Frederick.

Mr. Mortimer then recollected the unfeeling manner in which he had spoken of the poor man, little thinking that it was of one whom he had seen and known.—And you saw him," continued he, addressing himself to Frederick, "and his wife, I think you said: he has left no family, has he?"

"He has not," answered Frederick.

Here the conversation stopped, and Mr. Mortimer, after taking a few turns in the library, left his companion to his own meditations. But these meditations, though assisted by a valuable and numerous library, were not sufficiently attractive to detain him within doors, and he strolled out that he might enjoy the fineness of the morning. It was Mr. Brownlow's plan, as he frequently had guests staying at his house, to suffer his guests to use their own discretion or ingenuity to find their morning's amusement, and most frequently he set them to entertain one another; for he thought that it was quite enough for him to entertain them at and after dinner. Now Mr. Mortimer was one of those visitors whom it was most difficult to manage or to get rid of for a morning, as he would take every opportunity that he could of fastening himself upon his host; and it was therefore agreeable to Mr. Brownlow to have at the same time such a visitor as Frederick Stratton, to whom

he might depute the charge of the indolent gentleman.

But as Mr. Brownlow was pleased to be rid of the incumbrance of the gentleman of ancient family, so in like manner Frederick Stratton was not displeased to be left by the said gentleman to the pursuance of his own thoughts, and the amusements of his own inclination. So left, he wandered from the house, and it was in his thoughts to direct his steps to the cottage where poor Williams had so lately breathed his last. He had felt for him very keenly, and more perhaps than most persons could have felt. He had a feeling of sympathy; for he had been himself, at one time, nearly in the same vortex; and he felt that he had narrowly escaped from a dreadful calamity, and a painful degradation of soul.

In his walk towards the cottage, he met with Mr. Riddleton and his lovely ward, and it was a pleasing sight to him, and a most agreeable contrast with his last companion. The young lady

did not manifest any obvious symptoms of the tears which she had been shedding in the morning, but the agitation of her spirits gave a more than usual look of interest and animation to her countenance, and her beauty shone to greater than ordinary advantage. Had Frederick at that moment met her quite alone, he certainly would have been emboldened to speak his love; and even as it was, there was an expression of cordiality and satisfaction in the greeting which Amelia could not but perceive and understand. Indeed, her apprehension had been rendered more acute by the interview and discussion which she had that morning had with her most worthy and vigilant guardian. The parties, Amelia and Frederick, were now in that state of mutual understanding which puts to the test the good sense and proper feelings of the mind. They had power over each other, and they were each sensible of it. Frederick had paid the lady serious and unremitting attention; she had seen that this attention had been well

received. Amelia also was conscious that she had manifested no dissatisfaction with the homage which the young gentleman had paid her; but on both sides there was yet something of doubt. Both parties gave themselves credit for penetration enough to discern character, and both were highly delighted with those honourable and excellent qualities of head and heart which they discovered in each other. But still there might be an error in their apprehension; they did not think it indeed very probable, yet they could not but think it possible, that there might be some slight shade of insincerity or heartlessness. It was possible that the young lady might be pleased with the attentions that were paid to her, as flattering her vanity; it was possible that the young gentleman might have been paying particular attentions without any serious meaning. There was not any painful apprehension on either side, yet there was sufficient doubt to give an interest and a stimulus to their feelings.

Mr. Riddleton was also a man of great penetration, but he had the faculty for which phrenologists are so remarkable. He could always see much better that which he was looking for, than that which he was not looking for. Now it had never occurred to him that his ward, though not admiring the Plantagenet, might yet be not indifferent to Frederick Stratton; therefore, when the parties met, and showed to each other symptoms of extraordinary gladness at the meeting, Mr. Riddleton saw not those symptoms; still farther, so very unlike the generality of guardians was this kind-hearted and simple man, that instead of being morosely angry with his ward for having refused the hand of an opulent suitor and one of high family, he was rather angry with the suitor himself for having been the means of causing any uneasiness in the mind of his favourite and beloved relative.

Being somewhat displeased with Mr. Mortimer, the trusty guardian was so much the

more pleased with any one else; and though he did not discern any very strong symptoms of joy in the countenance of the young lady, at meeting with Frederick Stratton, yet he saw that she was glad of the occurrence, and he was glad of it too; and he greeted Frederick very cordially, with, indeed, an obviously altered feeling towards him; this also contributed to rivet on the mind of the young gentleman feelings favourable to his hopes.

"You were speaking yesterday," said Mr. Riddleton to Frederick, "of a poor man who died suddenly in a cottage in this neighbourhood: are we far from the place? Perhaps it would be an act of kindness to the poor woman that is left, if we were to call and offer some assistance to her?"

"I shall be most happy to conduct you to the place; it is not very far from where we now are"

"I have no doubt that my cousin Brownlow," said Mr. Riddleton, "has taken care of the poor woman; but in cases of this nature there

may be no harm done by a little extra assistance. I always make it a rule, Mr. Stratton, to sympathize with the afflicted; and when I come into the country, I generally visit the cottages of the poor people: indeed, we cannot tell in London who are objects of charity, and who are not; but in the country there cannot be so much deception. If I lived in the country, I should pay very great attention to the poor: I believe my cousin Brownlow does not neglect them. There is a great pleasure in doing good."

"There is, Sir," replied Frederick, who saw that he was expected to say something; "and it is a happiness, where they who have the means, possess the inclination also."

Frederick saw, but he did not say, that there is a pleasure in talking about doing good. To Mr. Riddleton there was indeed a pleasure in talking about any thing, every thing, or nothing; and as he was a rich man, he was privileged; and to say truth, though he did talk loudly about

his benevolence and liberality, there was some truth in what he said. He was very benevolently disposed, and to those who knew him best, there was something not altogether disagreeable even in the endlessness and nothingness of his prate. He had also that very desirable faculty, which most of his way of talking have: he could not conceive it possible that any one could ever be weary of his talk; and therefore, he was cheerful and pleasant, even when most tiresome.

In answer to Frederick's remark,—for Mr. Riddleton seldom left any remark unanswered, —he said, "Ah, Sir, it is a great pity that so many who have the means of doing good should not have a heart for it; for want of this there is much suffering in the world that might be alleviated."

They at this moment arrived at a turn in their walk, from whence there was a somewhat wider extent of prospect than is usual in that part of the country. At the sight of this, Mr.

Riddleton was in raptures; and, as if forgetting that there was any other object of pursuit before him at the moment, he stopped suddenly, and exclaimed, "Bless me! what a beautiful prospect!—Cousin Amelia, my dear, look, pray look!—Mr. Stratton, did you ever see a finer piece of scenery in your life? What a charming picture it would make!"

So cousin Amelia and Mr. Stratton were of course under the necessity of standing still to admire this unparalleled, beautiful landscape.

"I should not wonder," said Mr. Riddleton, "if we could see St. Paul's, if we had a telescope, and the day was clear enough."

Frederick Stratton and Amelia did not think that by standing still they should make the day clear, or provide themselves with a telescope. They therefore, after looking for a few seconds at the scenery before them, made a movement as if to continue their walk; but that movement did not at all comport with Mr. Riddleton's ideas of the sublime and beautiful.

Addressing himself to the gentleman, he said, "I admire the country, Sir, at this time of year; it is beautiful, very beautiful. What a fine effect that dense foliage has upon the scene before us! And the meadows, Sir; do you observe the meadows, Nature's velvet carpet?—fine idea that! my friend Silversides, who is an eloquent man, is very partial to that metaphor. The meadows you see, how finely they are dotted with sheep! you can just distinguish the sheep, and see that they are living animals. Nature is full of the sublime and beautiful. Did you ever read Burke, on the Sublime and Beautiful?"

"I never did," answered Frederick.

"Indeed! Well, I cannot say that I am much surprised. The book has been very much out of vogue latterly; but Silversides says that he intends to bring it into fashion again. That Silversides is a man of very great genius; he is decidedly the first man of his day—a wonderful man, Sir, a wonderful man!"

Frederick had not seen so many men as Mr.

Riddleton had, but he had observed more attentively those whom he had seen, and therefore he was not a very firm believer in the wonderfulness of man. He bowed, however, to Mr. Riddleton's decision, and expressed not any doubt that Mr. Silversides was the most wonderful of men. But, as he was desirous of again seeing the poor woman, whom he knew, or strongly suspected, to be in great distress, he ventured to remind Mr. Riddleton, that if he was inclined to reach the cottage in any reasonable time, it would be desirable to proceed.

"Right," said Mr. Riddleton, waking from his reverie; "we will proceed without any farther delay."

That was more easily said than done, for the worthy guardian's digressional propensities were powerful enough to overcome every thing else; and so, after a few more steps in the right direction, and in the proper place, he stopped once more, and that was not for the purpose of

admiring any splendid scenery, but for the more convenient and emphatic enunciation of some discourse into which he had begun to enter with Frederick Stratton. He stood stock still; and turning himself half round, so as to face Frederick, the young man could not help doing the same; and so, instead of walking side by side, there they both stood face to face; and Mr. Riddleton, though a very unreluctant speaker, had, without being aware of it, a very reluctant hearer: but Frederick Stratton was a young man, and it became him to be patient; he was moreover a lover, and it became him to be all courtesy and compliance towards the guardian of his beloved. There is a great good in the variety of propensities by which human beings are actuated and impelled; so there is amusement for all: now it seemed to be Mr. Riddleton's notion, that the world, and all that is therein, had been brought into existence merely to be talked about: life and the living were to his view one vast *conversazione*. Tri-

fling at first enunciation as this may appear, it was a better notion than many of our species take up with. Some think that the world and its contents were made to be grumbled at; some think they were made to be quarrelled about; some think the universe a large dining-room, and their imaginations are for ever culinary. Talking has some semblance of philosophizing; and philosophy is always highly respectable, at least it thinks itself so.

By means of various interruptions and digressions, the walk to the cottage in which poor Williams had died was considerably delayed, and they found, when they arrived there, that though there might be time enough to bestow their alms upon the destitute and worse than widowed woman, yet they could not indulge themselves with any discourse of sympathy with the poor mourner. When, however, they entered the cottage, they found that the poor woman whom they were seeking was not there, and her place was supplied by two old women,

who could give no other account of the matter, than that they were employed to attend the burying of the deceased, and that the person who was with him when he died, had been taken ill, and was gone to her friends; but who her friends were, or in what place they lived, or by what conveyance the poor woman had been removed, they could not say. Mr. Riddleton, who was never backward in asking questions, though by no means particular in having them answered, made many inquiries, to which there could not be found any satisfactory or intelligible reply. The most astonishing part of the affair was, that when he inquired, whether any pecuniary assistance was required, he received an answer in the negative. He took it for granted, that his cousin Brownlow had amply attended to that matter.

CHAPTER XXV.

After the matters recorded in the preceding chapter had taken place, Frederick Stratton returned to Nettlethorpe, better pleased with himself than he had been for many years, but by no means satisfied with all existing circumstances. The very flattering attention which he had received from Mr. Brownlow, the satisfaction which he experienced in returning to the habits and enjoyments of civil society, the delight which he felt in the removal of the burden which had so heavily weighed on his father's mind,—all these circumstances gave him an interest and pleasure in being, which he had never known before. There was, if possible, greater

satisfaction in the family at his return to Nettlethorpe, than there had been when even first he returned from his wandering life. But he felt that perplexities and difficulties yet remained, not perhaps insuperable, but requiring on his part much dexterity and management, and depending also on many circumstances over which he had no control.

In the first place, he had to regret that he had left Mr. Brownlow's house, uncertain when, if ever, he should repeat his visit there; and that he had left, without having given any other manifestation of his attachment to Amelia than particular and serious attentions. In the next place, he had to anticipate an unpleasant opposition to his father's will, in declining, as he thought was unavoidable, the match which his father had in view for him. And last, but not least, was the fear, that should every other obstacle be removed, the unchangeable one, the condition of his birth, might be a bar to his happiness. On this he dwelt with painful intensity

of meditation. The two former troubles or difficulties he considered to be within his own power to surmount; but the last had no remedy. Converts are always zealots; so it was with Frederick Stratton, and that in a very high degree. He had once, and but recently, looked upon all the institutions and arrangements of society as altogether absurd and contemptible; and he had even made a merit of opposing and despising them. But when he had been brought to think less unfavourably of them, he made up for his former neglect by subsequent zeal and ardour in their favour. So far, indeed, did that zeal carry him, that he was almost prepared to think that there would be a want of delicacy and propriety in any lady of good and unsullied family, who should accept the hand of one situated as he was.

From one of his perplexities he was very speedily delivered. Almost immediately upon his return home, his father adverted to the dreaded topic. Happily for Frederick, he saw

as great an alteration in his father's manner as he had felt in his own mind. Mr. Stratton had been habituated, as has been already intimated, to exercise a somewhat arbitrary sway over the various members of his family, and frequently there was much of harshness in his behaviour towards them. The harshness and irritability, however, which he had displayed, were not altogether constitutional, but owed much of their strength to the unpleasant and annoying situation in which he had been placed; and now, when that calamity was remedied, the joy of relief had sweetened his temper and harmonized his feelings.

"Frederick," said Mr. Stratton, "I wrote to you, when you were in Hertfordshire, making a request that you would suspend your choice of a partner till your return. I was not aware under whose roof you then were; had I known it, I should not have made that request; but when I learnt where you were, I endeavoured to unsay what I had said."

"Is Miss Brownlow, then, the lady in whose behalf you wished me to suspend my choice?"

"The very same. I thought you were in London when I wrote you my first letter; and notwithstanding the symptoms you have recently shown of a sounder way of thinking, I had my fears for you, lest you might form an undesirable acquaintance; I knew there was no danger that you should unite yourself with a simpleton; but I had my apprehensions that you might overlook much that ought to be considered, for the sake of what you might suppose to be superiority of mind."

"I believe," said Frederick with much seriousness, "that you may now very safely trust me."

"I hope I may," said his father, "but be not too confident, and too ready to trust yourself. You have now seen the young lady, and you will probably soon see her again. She will very shortly pay a visit to her worthy relative here at Nettlethorpe. From what

little I have seen of Miss Brownlow, for she was here when you were away from us, it struck me that a young lady of her turn of mind would be best calculated to rectify the vagaries of your mind, and to settle you into sobriety."

"But, Sir," said Frederick, "did it never occur to you, that there might be objections on the part of Miss Brownlow? Is it not a piece of presumption in me to aspire to the hand of one so much my superior?"

A slight frown for a moment clouded the father's brow, and an involuntary shudder ran through his frame. It was soon over, and he said, "Such language, my boy, sounds plausible enough, but there is as much real folly as there is seeming humility in it. I have told you before, and I tell you again, you must take me rather as a caution than as a pattern. I have been infinitely more fortunate than I deserved to be; but with every possible alleviation I have had painful and bitter suffering. I

would not have you to be arrogant and assuming, but I would have you to be aspiring. The struggle to raise one's self in society is the very essence of civilization."

"But," said Frederick, slightly smiling, "if I am content with such rank and condition as I already hold in society, may I not be excused from endeavouring after a change?"

"You cannot rightly enjoy consideration in society unless you are aiming to increase that consideration; and with those who do not seek to increase it, it gradually and surely declines. The great mass of the community in a civilized country consists of those who are rising in the world and those who are falling. Few families are stationary for many generations; and those who are so nominally, will not, upon examination, be found to be so really. And if you have actually renounced your anti-civilization crotchets as sincerely and heartily as you profess, you must have that feeling, and you must of necessity have a desire to stand well in the world."

"Most certainly, Sir," answered Frederick with seriousness, "I have that desire. From the little that I have seen of human character, I have observed that there is something desirable in the consideration with which they are treated, who are rising or who have risen in the world. It would, however, better please me, if I am to distinguish myself, that it should be by means of my own talents professionally excited, than by any increase of wealth accidentally acquired."

"That is a very proper feeling," replied the elder Stratton, "and I would have you encourage it. At the same time, however, be pleased to consider, that if you have it not in your power to choose the most desirable, it is not therefore necessary that you should refuse that which is within your power. I tell you candidly, that I have a feeling in favour of family respectability, and you are my only hope; and with you the name may expire, or worse; and by you it may be made

again honourable, and more so than it has been. I have no wish to dictate your choice; but I do wish to caution you against such a choice as you may live to repent, or, at all events, to regret."

"I think, Sir," said the young man, "that I have sufficient discernment of character not to make a choice of which I shall ever have occasion to repent."

"You may have discernment of character," said the father; "but in that respect you may improve as you grow older: there is, however, something more than discernment of character needed in this matter; you ought also to apprehend and appreciate situation. You might select for a wife a woman of many virtues, and of decided excellence; but consider, that the constitution of civilized society is such, that with every possible effort after seclusion, we cannot altogether live to and by ourselves; and the more excellent, and virtuous, and amiable, the character of the woman

whom you may marry, the more mortifying and distressing will be those annoyances which spring from inaptitude of situation and connexion."

Frederick and his father did not exactly understand each other. The young gentleman was referring to the misfortune of his birth, with a susceptibility much more strong than his father had felt; and the elder Mr. Stratton was fearful that his son's notions on the subject of society and civilization, had merely received a slight impulse of improvement, and not so total a revolution as they really had.

The young man replied with great earnestness, "I assure you, Sir, most solemnly, that I will not form a choice of the nature to which you allude. But, at the same time, while I would carefully abstain from a connexion which might humble myself, ought I not to be equally careful to avoid a connexion which might humble my wife?"

"There is no one to whom you are likely to offer your hand, and who is likely to accept it, who could suffer any humiliation in becoming your wife."

This remark was certainly encouraging to the young gentleman; but he could not still help thinking, that the circumstance of his birth had been the means of making him lose caste. His attachment also to Amelia was now so far confirmed, that he began to be a kind of self-tormentor from over-fastidiousness. How little did he understand himself, when he set himself as a rectifier of things in general, and undertook to become a leveller. The levelling system was by no means adapted to the constitution of his mind; for distinction, singularity, prominence, eminence, were the objects of his constant and uneasy ambition: he was ever in extremes, and would not condescend to the undistinguished medium. As a corrector of abuses, and a regenerator of the sys-

tem of society, he was most outrageous; and as an approver, again, of the existing usages of the social state, he became most fastidious in the observance of its forms and etiquette. But in all this there was something good, there was something that was sure to endear him to some individuals. The zeal and earnestness with which he took up any subject, made him so far an excellent partisan. He was by no means addicted to that apparently plausible but really useless vice, called trimming; for, if he was of any party at all, he was most emphatically and uncompromisingly so.

In this point of view, then, he could hardly be said to be changed; he remained the same essentially, he was only changed formally: and perhaps this is the only change that can be expected, or effected, in the human mind. So far, however, it was good for Frederick, and so far it was agreeable to his father. For though the notions of the young man were

exceedingly fastidious, yet this excess was by no means so unpleasing to his father as the reverse had been; nor was it likely to lead to so much moral and physical evil.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FREDERICK Stratton had not been at home many weeks, before Amelia paid her expected visit to her reverend relative at Nettlethorpe; and as the young gentleman, though mightily differing in feelings and views from his worthy rector, was much of a favourite at the parsonage, he had of course abundant opportunity of interviews with Miss Brownlow. They conversed much with each other, and they discussed many topics literary, moral, philosophical, and political; and though literature, morals, philosophy, and politics, do not seem essentially to belong to love, yet these discussions rendered the parties better pleased with

each other than they had been before. And when the young man found that his time passed very pleasantly with the young lady, it was an easy thing for him to imagine that he could not live without her. Perhaps he was wrong in this imagination; but it is the privilege, or at least the practice, of lovers to exaggerate; and they have the same apology as the boys at Eton have for plundering travellers, "*Mos pro lege.*"

In short, the attachment between the parties had so much strengthened and increased, that Frederick no longer regarded the scruples which he had once felt, but determined to make an immediate offer of his hand and heart; it was indeed obvious to him that he was not indifferent to the lady; it was also his opinion, that having endeavoured to gain the young lady's affections, it would be unjust and dishonourable to delay longer than was necessary a declaration of attachment. The offer was made and accepted.

The agreeable intelligence was by Frederick

immediately communicated to his father. Delighted and pleased was Mr. Stratton with the prospect that was now before him of his only surviving son forming a connexion which would be an honour and happiness to him, and which would in all human probability preserve him from any relapse into those eccentricities which had threatened to involve him in serious calamity.

For several weeks Amelia continued her visit at the house of her clerical relative, and during the whole of that time Frederick was unremitting in his attentions, and most happy in the acquaintance. Day passed after day, and he scarcely felt the lapse of time, till he heard that the day for the young lady's departure was fixed, and that day was much nearer than he had anticipated, and its advance was more rapid than he desired. But lovers' time is like farmers' weather, it is never such as to please them; it is too slow or too rapid in its movements. That old paradox, that everlasting riddle, time, is a puzzle to philosophers and a

plague to lovers. When its wings are clogged with honey, then it flies most swiftly; but when they are wafted by the breeze of sighs, they are most languid in their movement, and most slow in their progress.

Much as the lovers were together, and happy as they were in each other's society, it did occasionally happen that Amelia walked out alone; and that was for the purpose of sketching some romantic and picturesque scenery in the immediate vicinity of Nettlethorpe. Within a day or two of her departure, she took a walk to the spot from whence she had drawn one of her most favourite sketches. It was a scene which Frederick had pointed out to her, and she had made a drawing of it, which her lover was pleased to think, at least, most exquisitely accurate, if not absolutely flattering; and the young lady was desirous of making the sketch most perfect. The spot was beautifully secluded, and its aspect most completely solitary. It was a piece of wood scenery, not

forest scenery, for the number of trees that formed the group was by no means large, but their disposition was romantic, and their character was graceful and picturesque. There was no appearance of human habitation, nor symptom of the hand of labour. The tall dark trees reposed upon the clear blue sky, and occasionally disclosed between their trunks glimpses of a distant miniature landscape.

At Amelia's last visit to the scene, while she was intently engaged in comparing the labours of her pencil with the scenery that it had attempted to depict, she saw creeping from behind one of the tall trees a swarthy female, manifestly of the gypsey tribe. The woman was alone, and there were no symptoms of any encampment or party. Young ladies, when alone, are not unusually frightened at the unexpected appearance of an individual of uncouth aspect, and gypsies more especially are exceedingly terrible; but gypsies do not eat young women, though they sometimes may make bread of them. Amelia,

however, did not scream, nor faint, nor run away; she would indeed have been quite as well pleased if the gypsey had not made her appearance. The woman approached the fair artist with a look of circumspection, as if fearful of observation. Amelia naturally supposed that the object of the meditated address was to beg, and, in order to meet the supplication, was preparing to open her purse. The woman advanced with a hurried step, and said, "Young lady, you need not be afraid of me; I would be your friend. I should be happy, if you please, to look into your hand."

"Perhaps," answered Amelia, "you would, if there were any thing in it."

"I could read it better if it were empty," said the gypsey.

"If you could gain nothing but knowledge from my hand," said Amelia with a smile, "you would gain but little."

"But you might gain much," answered the woman, "much that would be for your preser-

vation." The gypsey then looked earnestly at Amelia's face, and said, "I see that you are in great danger."

Amelia smiled, but soon checked the smile, and said with much seriousness, "Good woman, if you are in want, I will give you such assistance as my purse can afford you; but I assure you I am no believer in your professed art of fortune-telling."

"Ah, my good young lady," replied the gypsey, "so you say, and so many young people say now-a-days, but they do believe more than they are aware of. You will do well if you let me tell you your fortune."

"I tell you again," said Amelia, "I have no wish to know it. I have no desire to pry into futurity. If I am to have misfortunes, it will be better for me not to know them beforehand."

"But if you won't believe what I shall tell you, it will not make you unhappy."

"It will make me neither happy nor un-

happy; but, if you want any money, take this." So saying, Amelia handed a shilling to the poor woman, who, though not reluctant to accept the donation, seemed much more eager to pursue her vocation of fortune-telling; and therefore the very instant that she had taken the money from the hand of Amelia, she hastily and almost violently grasped the hand, and began to inspect its lines.

Not wishing to prolong the interview by any farther opposition, and supposing that all resistance would be in vain, Amelia suffered the woman to inspect the hand at her own will. After the gypsey had detained it firmly and eagerly within her grasp for a few minutes, she gently let the hand fall, and said, with an earnestness which almost discomposed the young lady, "Miss, you have enemies!"

"Enemies!" echoed Amelia, "I trust not, good woman; if I have, they are not of my own making."

"Perhaps not, young lady; such a sweet

face as yours does not seem likely to make enemies. But you have enemies; you have enemies among those that appear to be your best friends. You have a lover."

Amelia was going to speak, and to beg to have the interview brought to a close; but the gypsey interrupted her, and continued, saying, "You have two lovers."

Impatiently, and almost angrily, Amelia turned away from the woman, and was about to return homewards, but the fortune-teller laid hold of her arm, and would proceed: "I tell you, young lady, you have two lovers, and one of them is your bitterest enemy, though he professes himself your dearest and kindest friend. Be warned by a poor old woman, or you may live to repent your rashness and your want of belief."

From the earnestness of the poor woman's manner, and from the desire which she manifested to communicate some intelligence, Amelia took it for granted that there must be some-

thing more in this interruption than a mere propensity to fortune-telling. She therefore very calmly and deliberately said, "Good woman, I do not heed your fortune-telling, for I do not suppose that you know any thing more of futurity than I do; but if you have any information to communicate to me, let me have it plainly and distinctly."

The gypsey had been too much accustomed to the mysteries and obscurities of vagrant vaticination, to say any thing in a straight-forward manner; she therefore continued in the same style, "Alas! young lady, there are dark spots and there are bright spots in your destiny; and you are placed in a great difficulty, and you stand in awful danger. You look gay now, but you are threatened with heavy cares and serious difficulties; beware of protestations and professions."

Amelia's patience was sorely tried with all this indefinite declamation, and said, "Really there is nothing more in all this talk than what

you might as well say to every young woman you might meet."

"But," replied the woman, "it is not every young woman who would know how to profit by the warning so well as you. Beware of the handsomest man you ever saw!"

These last words were uttered in an oracular tone, and having so said, the gypsey departed, leaving Amelia much more disturbed by the interview than she had imagined it possible for her to be by any predictions or soothsayings.

The handsomest man that Amelia had ever seen was her lover, of course; but why there was any necessity for being upon her guard against this gentleman she could not discern. There are some individuals whose frankness of manner promptly and naturally inspires confidence, but still there are others who are frank in their deportment, and who conceal, paradoxically as it may sound, an internal darkness by an external brightness. It was not, it could not be in the mind of Amelia that this was the charac-

ter of Frederick Stratton. In fact, the very suspicion scarcely crossed her thoughts. A suspicion, however, did enter her mind, that this woman had been employed, and the only person that could have employed her must be Mr. Mortimer.

The antecedent improbability of such a manœuvre was, however, sufficiently great to puzzle and perplex the mind of the young lady. The march of intellect is so amazingly rapid by means of *conversaziones*, that a frequent attendant on these developers of intellect and enlighteners of the mind, can hardly suppose it possible that there should be so much ignorance in the world as there really is. Now Mr. Mortimer had not been, as Amelia Brownlow had, a constant attendant on Mr. Riddleton's *conversaziones;* if he had been, he would have been upon many subjects far more enlightened than he was; and of course, could not have come under the suspicion of believing that any one could believe in the predictions of gypsies.

Amelia knew nothing of Frederick Stratton's early history; nothing of his wanderings with these strange people; nothing of his histrionic efforts in barns; and but little of his design of regenerating the world, and of introducing a new order of things. It was not, therefore, with any intention of reminding him of his past vagaries, that she made mention of the subject, observing, that the gypsies were not so numerous in the neighbourhood of Nettlethorpe as they were in the vicinity of her guardian's residence in Hertfordshire, but that she had seen one that morning wandering alone. "I wonder," she added, "that any one in these days can be so infatuated as to heed their predictions; it must be so obvious that they can know nothing of futurity."

Frederick did not know why the subject was introduced, but he indifferently replied, "It is not so obvious to every body as it may perhaps be to us."

"None, however," said Amelia, "but the

most ignorant and uneducated classes of the community, can put the slightest faith in their predictions."

"I am not quite sure of that," replied Frederick; "there may be an influence of fashion; and what is unfashionable, is, of course, absurd."

"But, surely it never could have been fashionable to believe in palmistry?"

"Is there," said the young gentleman, "any more essential absurdity in palmistry, than in craniology? And yet, in the latter, there are many believers who would not condescend to give the slightest attention to the principles of palmistry. That is one of those matters which now receives no examination. If it were made the subject of examination, it would assuredly find some believers; for investigation seems to have the power to diminish the firmness of our belief, and to abate the confidence of our disbelief."

Amelia looked with astonishment at Frede-

rick, and then smilingly said, "I think you are laughing at me; for you are talking after the manner of some of those gentlemen who attend Mr. Riddleton's *conversaziones;* they affect to deny what all the rest of the world believes, and to believe what all the rest of the world denies. Have you ever been at any of these parties?"

"I was once, and only once present," said Frederick, "at a *conversazione* at Mr. Riddleton's house; and it was there," continued he, bowing, "that I first had the pleasure of meeting you; therefore I shall always hold *conversaziones* in esteem: formerly I thought lightly of them."

A smile and a blush divided the empire of the young lady's countenance, and dropping her lovely eyelids, she faintly said, "Indeed!" and then sank into a reverie. There came into her mind a recollection of having heard something of a young gentleman, not of faultless character, or unimpeachable con-

duct, who had seen her at Mr. Riddleton's, and who had expressed afterwards his admiration of her. She also recollected that something had been said of his having led a wandering life at one time with gypsies, and at another with strolling-players; but it had never before come into her mind to connect the idea of this strange being with Frederick Stratton.

It has happened, that some individuals having led irregular lives, and being afterwards brought to better thoughts and more decorous deportment, have yet been proud, as it were, of boasting, or at least of talking loudly, of their earlier aberrations: and it has also happened, that those who from humble and pennyless origin have grown rich, have had a pride in reverting to the days of their penury and destitution. The principle is the same in both cases; they are proud of their merit in having risen from poverty to wealth, or from vice to virtue, or from folly to wisdom. But

this was not the feeling that influenced Frederick Stratton: he was fairly and truly ashamed of his folly, and he most heartily regretted that he had been guilty of so many absurdities; and he was no more pleased to be reminded of his past vagaries, than Mr. Pitt was pleased when Horne Tooke reminded him of his having been a reformer; or than the Poet-laureate was pleased at the publication of Wat Tyler. Now Amelia Brownlow felt disposed to make certain inquiries of Frederick Stratton, and for that purpose began by saying, "Did you ever reside in London for any length of time?"

Thereupon Frederick Stratton did not feel inclined to answer such questions as might be put to him, and he was even more annoyed than when Mr. Mortimer put the same interrogation to him. He answered the question somewhat evasively, saying, "I am not much acquainted with London; I have been there occasionally."

"I thought," said Amelia, with the utmost innocence of intention, "that you had been acquainted with some men of letters there."

So, indeed, he had, but he had ceased to think so highly of them as in days past. Dr. Grimwood and Theodore Clarke were both of them geniuses in their way, but then they were queer geniuses; and Frederick feared that, should he plead guilty to an acquaintance with them, some inquiry might be made concerning their literary productions, and these, as far as he knew any thing of them, were by no means of the highest order. Dr. Grimwood, indeed, had meditated tragedy, comedy, epic poetry, and county history; but Frederick knew that he had never absolutely perpetrated any thing but indexes. Theodore Clarke had used his pen more than his name, and had sung anonymously the praises of many an article of use or of ornament in the advertising columns of the Times or Morning Chronicle; therefore Frederick answered the question briefly and care-

lessly, saying, "Very slightly, they were people of no note; I knew them by accident."

Amelia recollected that the young gentleman of doubtful character had been introduced to Mr. Riddleton's *conversazione* by a Mr. Spratt, a man of letters, and of no great eminence; so there was much perplexity and doubt in the young lady's mind, and in spite of her great intellectual strength, the appearance and the language of the gypsey became a painful annoyance to her.

CHAPTER XXVII.

By the return of Amelia to the house of her guardian, the lovers were separated, and an indescribably unpleasant feeling occupied the minds of them both. On the part of Frederick, there was a restlessness and uneasiness at the thought that he could not recall the past; and he recollected the exhortation of his father, enjoining him to be careful to avoid that which he might repent, but could not undo. He felt, also, that he had acted somewhat disingenuously in having so studiously and carefully concealed from Amelia his past history. And he also had suspicions that some mischief-loving im-

pertinent ones had been endeavouring to poison her mind, and to prejudice her against him.

Amelia also left Nettlethorpe with a heavier heart than she had entered it withal. There was an impression upon her mind that there was something not altogether right in the family of Mr. Stratton, and in the conduct of Frederick.

The next procedure was to state to the young lady's guardians the fact of the existence of an engagement, subject, of course, to their approval, between her and Mr. Frederick Stratton. Mr. Brownlow heard the information as a matter of course, as what he had expected, and almost desired. But when the tidings were conveyed to Mr. Riddleton, that worthy man was seized with a violent fit of the fidgets, and he said, "Bless me! bless me!" nearly fifty times in a breath. It was well for him that the *conversazione* season was over, otherwise he would have made his ward's engagement with Frederick the subject of wearisome discussion, directly or

indirectly, with those kind friends who came to his house to talk wisdom, and to look at pretty pictures, or other pretty playthings. As it was, however, he took care, in his troubles and perplexities, to avail himself of the counsel of his learned and ingenious friend Silversides.

It does not, indeed, follow, as a necessary consequence, that he who is deeply versed in poetry and metaphysics, is therefore best calculated for assisting a careful guardian with the wisest counsel for the disposal of his ward. But Mr. Riddleton thought that knowledge was wisdom, and that wisdom in one thing was wisdom in every thing.

"Bless me! Mr. Silversides, bless me! did you ever hear any thing like it? My ward, my lovely ward, as you were polite enough to call her, is absolutely engaged without my consent previously had and obtained. Is not that very inaccurate, Mr. Silversides, and very strange?"

"Not very strange," answered Mr. Silversides, "but somewhat inaccurate, perhaps: the

young lady is not married without your consent, I hope and trust."

"Oh dear no!" said Mr. Riddleton, shuddering at the very thought, "not so bad as that. But alack! it is a sad thing that my relative Mr. Brownlow should be so exceedingly remiss; he keeps scarcely any watch at all; he absolutely was so careless as to suffer a young gentleman to come into his house and fall in love with Amelia."

"And may not the same be said of you?" asked Mr. Silversides.

"Bless me! indeed it may: but then, Mr. Silversides, who would ever have thought it possible that any one could have fallen in love at a *conversazione*, where the attention is altother absorbed and occupied with science and literature?"

"But what can be done in this matter, Mr. Riddleton?"

"Ay, what indeed? That is the very thing that I want to know."

"And may I make bold to ask," said Mr. Silversides, "who and what the gentleman is that is engaged to Miss Brownlow?"

"A very improper person, indeed, for my ward to accept. It is that self-same young man that you mentioned to me, as having been a gypsey, and a strolling-player, and a methodist-preacher, and an infidel."

"All these are very bad things," said Mr. Silversides; "but still he is a young man of respectable though not of high family, and he has relinquished his boyish fancies. He may turn out a very sober and rational man."

"He may, to be sure," said Mr. Riddleton, "but may he not also quite as likely turn methodist-parson, or strolling-player, again? There is no such thing as guarding against it. I wish we could take out a statute of lunacy against him."

"His paying his respects to Miss Brownlow can hardly be adduced as a proof of insanity," said Mr. Silversides.

"But then, his having been a methodist-parson, and his having set himself up for a prophet; what can you think of all that? Bless me! I wish I knew what to do, Mr. Silversides; I am sadly perplexed."

Now it was not in the power, however much it might have been in the inclination, of Mr. Silversides to assist his *conversazione* friend with advice how to act in the present emergency. Some wise men, when they have nothing to say, look foolish; but this was not the case with Mr. Silversides, who looked, if possible, wiser than ever; and then taking Mr. Riddleton by the arm, he said, "If you will take my advice, Sir, the best thing that you can do in the present posture of affairs, is not to take any immediate steps, but to wait a little and see how matters turn out, and then to act according to circumstances."

No wonder that the man who was capable of uttering such an oracular sentence as this, should look wondrously wise. It is perhaps

one of the most comprehensive pieces of advice ever ministered to mortals, and it is applicable to such an infinitude of circumstances, that its value can never be stated. Few are the cases to which it is not applicable, with the exception perhaps of a house on fire, or being pursued by a mad bull.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Riddleton, doubtingly, not distrusting the soundness of the counsel, but suspecting his own competency to act upon it; "Yes, your remark is good, Mr. Silversides; but then, what if the young lady should be married without my consent? What would the world say to me then?"

Mr. Riddleton was most marvellously afraid of what the world would or might say of him, forgetting, or not liking to think, that the world said nothing and thought as little about him. In the midst of this discussion, there came a letter addressed to Miss Brownlow, at Mr. Riddleton's. The anxious guardian took the letter, and looked at the superscription, and looked at Mr. Silversides, and said, "Bless me! how

fortunate!—I mean, how unfortunate! Now, Miss Brownlow is not here, and I am quite unable to say when she will be here."

Then he looked at the letter again, and thought that, as his name was on the superscription, he might be permitted to open it; and he said to his literary and scientific friend, "What do you think of the matter, Mr. Silversides? would it be inaccurate, if I were to open this letter? Perhaps it may require an immediate answer, and perhaps it may concern me. Moreover, as guardian to the young lady, being as it were *in loco parentis*, as the Latins say, I conceive that I have a right, not so much a right, I should call it, as a duty—for it is a duty that, as guardian, I see that my ward holds not an improper correspondence with any individual or individuals. What think you, Mr. Silversides? what think you? you are a man of understanding and of philosophic mind."

Mr. Silversides thought that Mr. Riddleton

had a great curiosity to see the contents of the letter addressed to his ward; he thought, moreover, that Mr. Riddleton would gratify that curiosity, and that Mr. Riddleton would be best pleased with the advice which would recommend him to do that which he most earnestly desired. But Mr. Silversides was not willing to commit himself by recommending any such proceeding; he merely said, "That must altogether depend upon what is your usual practice."

"To be sure, yes, yes; you are right, no doubt," said Mr. Riddleton; "but this is a very peculiar case, a very peculiar case, indeed, Mr. Silversides. There is such a thing as an emergency, and I think that this may be fairly called an emergency."

Mr. Riddleton spoke quick, and his fingers moved rapidly and indefinitely while he was speaking; and presently, even before he had well finished speaking, the letter was open, and the name of Frederick Stratton was seen at the

end of it. And when a letter has been once unlawfully opened, it may as well be read: so thought Mr. Riddleton, and he proceeded forthwith to gratify his curiosity to the full. He read it with great eagerness, with great attention, and with great glee, and then, in tones of exultation, said to Mr. Silversides,

"Capital! this is the very thing; ay, ay, now the matter is settled! Now look—no, stop, I must not give you the letter, that would not be altogether accurate, perhaps. But observe, here I have it under his own hand, acknowledging all the facts. Well, that is honest, to say the least of it; he is an agreeable man, I must say, but still not a proper person for Amelia. Only think, what a thing it would be if my ward's husband should become a methodist-parson, or a gypsey,—it would be absolutely shocking; and then he might insist upon her being a gypsey too: poor thing! it would be the death of her; I cannot bear to think of it."

Then Mr. Silversides, when an opportunity

was offered him to speak, said, "Then I understand, that by this letter, the young gentleman gives up the young lady."

"Why no, not altogether, not exactly and explicitly so, but by inference and implication as it were. He acknowledges having deceived her, and so far, as I said, he is honest. He pleads guilty to having been in former days wild enough to have joined the gypsies, and to having run into many extravagancies of opinion; but he says he did it all in the simplicity and singleness of his heart: simple enough no doubt he was; but I don't know what he means by singleness, unless he mistakes the word for singularity, which is very likely, for he could not receive much instruction among the gypsies, and he never attended a *conversazione* party but once in his life. Now, Mr. Silversides, as he acknowledges all this, and says that he is prepared, if Amelia insists upon it, to give up the hope of her hand; of course, then, as being the young lady's guardian, I may

accept for her this offer of resignation. He is an honest man, however,—I must say that for him; I wish him well with all my heart, nobody more so; but it would never do for my ward's husband to become a methodist-parson, he could never attend our *conversaziones*."

Mr. Riddleton, having found relief to his burthened mind by the receipt of this letter, dismissed his confidential adviser, and betook himself to the task of letter-writing; and in due course Frederick Stratton was astonished and mortified at receiving from London the following answer to his heroic and self-denying epistle.

"SIR,

"AS guardian to Miss Amelia Brownlow, and being as it were *in loco parentis*, (you understand Latin, I presume?) I have the honour to inform you, that your letter has come to hand, and that your resignation of your engagement is thankfully accepted. At the same time,

wishing to make all proper acknowledgement of honourable conduct, I beg to assure you, that I am most especially pleased with your praiseworthy candour. Wishing you more happiness in some other connexion, than you could possibly expect in that recently contemplated,

"I remain, Sir,

"Your's most obediently,

"W. RIDDLETON."

When Frederick Stratton received this letter he stared at it with profound astonishment, and he forthwith proceeded with all due indecorum to play the part of a common-place lover as heartily and stupidly, as if he had never contemplated the regeneration of the world, and the explosion of all possible absurdities. He held the letter at arms' length, and pressed his hand upon his forehead, and gave that sort of look which is called agonizing. Then he rose from his seat, and let his hands fall perpendicularly at his sides, and he walked or paced

(which, on these occasions, is the properest word) up and down the room in a state of mental abstraction; then he folded his arms across his bosom, then he sighed, then he looked out at window, and though the sky was blue, and the sun was bright, and the fields were green, and the birds were singing, and the bees were humming, and the flies were buzzing, and the dogs were barking, and the men were whistling, and the cows were lowing, and the sheep were bleating, and the asses were braying, and the doves were cooing, and the rooks were cawing, and the frogs were croaking, nothing pleased him. Then, when he was tired of all this, he sat down again, and determined to write a sonnet. And he could not tell what to write about; and he did not know how to begin; and he bit many pens, and wasted much ink, and soiled many sheets of paper. And then, in the agony of his soul, he gave the table a tremendous thump with his fist, the noise of which brought his father into the apartment.

Now, as the elder Mr. Stratton had in his day frequent provocation, and strong temptation to thump the table with his fist, he sympathized with his son's sorrows, and asked the cause of them.

Frederick then handed Mr. Riddleton's letter to his father, having previously explained the occasion of it.

"Mr. Riddleton's a fool!" said the elder Mr. Stratton; "and you are not much better, Frederick."

There was very little consolation in the first part of that speech, and none at all in the last.

"But what could I do?" asked the young man; "I had every reason to suppose that those matters would come to her knowledge by some other means, and I thought it better to tell my own story, than to leave another to tell it for me."

"Now you begin to feel the ill consequences of having acted in contempt of the world's opinion."

"I acknowledge it," said the young man: "but who would have thought of a person of such superiority of mind as Miss Brownlow, being influenced by such narrow-minded prejudices?"

"Ay," said the father, "who would have thought it? Why, I should have thought it; and so would any one who had observed mankind. Few persons can afford to be independent of the world's opinion. I am sorry for you, with all my heart, and I wish that what has been done could be undone. But stay, let me see the letter again."

Thereupon, Mr. Stratton read the letter a second time, and more attentively; and when he had finished it, he gave it open into his son's hand, and said, "I am not quite sure that Amelia has had any concern in this letter; it appears to be written purely and solely by Mr. Riddleton himself. Can you imagine, that if the young lady had received your letter, she would not have answered it herself?"

"But surely, Sir," said Frederick, "you do not mean to say that Mr. Riddleton would open Miss Brownlow's letters, and answer them without her authority; for Miss Brownlow is not a child?"

"Perhaps, not" said Mr. Stratton; "but it is no uncommon thing for parents and guardians to regard as children always those who have been children to them once; and from all that I have heard of Mr. Riddleton, he is as likely to fall into this error as any one."

"Mr. Riddleton," replied Frederick, "always appeared to me to be a perfect gentleman."

"So he may be," said the father, "and be a great simpleton, nevertheless."

"But what would you have me to do?"

"Go and see Miss Brownlow yourself."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In pursuance of the advice which his father had given him, Frederick posted up to London. He did not go immediately to the house of Mr. Riddleton, but sought out his sober and quiet friend Captain Hartley. The retired officer was at his studies, conning over the Greek Testament, with a most exemplary and praiseworthy attention. The Captain's apartment was not like the usual apartments of half-pay officers, or of single gentlemen; his floor was not littered with boots, nor his table covered with unclassable nick-nacks; but on two neat sets of hanging shelves were prettily arranged the standard works of some of our

most approved classical authors; and besides the works of English genius, there were sundry translations from Continental writers; Zimmerman on Solitude was in remarkably handsome binding. On the top of the shelves, were China shepherds and shepherdesses, with a small plaster bust of Milton, and another of Seneca. There was also visible at the end of one of the shelves, and at the back of the books, the projecting end of an ebony German flute, with additional silver keys. The Captain's table was also neatness itself. It was covered with a fine blue cloth, having yellow edges, and there lay upon it, in seemly order, divers books,—a Greek Testament, a Greek Grammar, an English Bible, Parkhurst's Greek and English Lexicon, a quire of letter-paper, an ebony inkstand, and a case of portable-pens, and a French time-piece. All the books that were in use were covered with cartridge-paper, and such as were too obstinate to lie open of themselves, were assisted by the persuasion of an ivory folding-

stick. The Captain himself, also, was as neat as any article in the room. There he sat reading for orders.

The arrival of Frederick was unexpected, but the Captain was one of those to whom nothing appears unexpected.

"Oh, Hartley!" said Frederick, the very moment that he entered the apartment, "I am the most wretched of mortals."

"Indeed!" said the worthy and imperturbable Captain, "I am very sorry to hear it."

A bystander would have thought that the Captain did not believe his friend; and perhaps he did not, to the full literal extent of the affirmation; but he was too polite a man to express or insinuate any doubts, otherwise than by a very calm and moderated expression of sympathy.

"I have played the fool most egregiously. But you have not been to see us at Nettlethorpe for an age. Why don't you come? you can pursue your studies there."

"I thank you," said Hartley, "I intend very shortly to pay you a visit. But what is this calamity that afflicts you so seriously?"

"Positively," replied Frederick, "I am almost ashamed to tell you."

"A love affair?" said the Captain, smiling.

"You have divined it truly," said Frederick, also smiling; "but this is a matter in which you can assist me, or, at all events, give me some information. I am really almost disgusted afresh with the absurdity and narrow-mindedness of the great mass of mankind."

Hartley mildly replied, "But, my good friend, you ought not to be angry that all the world are not philosophers."

"But all the world need not be so abominably stupid," said Frederick, impatiently.

"I don't see how it can be helped," replied Hartley; "but let me know your grievance, and wherein I can be of any service to you."

And then he shut his books, and laid them regularly one upon another, and arranged anew

the whole order and economy of the table, and put himself into an attitude for determined conversation, and decided colloquy with his visitor. It was considerate in Hartley to make this arrangement, for thereby he put Frederick more at his ease, and did away with all feeling of interruption, which he would have experienced if the books had remained open, and waiting as it were to be resumed. Hartley would not have done so much for Theodore Clarke, or Dr. Grimwood, or the ingenious Spratt, nor indeed even for the great Mr. Silversides himself.

Thus placed at his ease, Frederick Stratton narrated to his good and valuable friend the particulars of his acquaintance with, and of his proposals to, Amelia Brownlow; and he concluded the narrative by saying, "Now I have reason to suspect that some of these gossiping acquaintance of your's and mine have been making rather too free with my name and character to Mr. Riddleton. He is himself manifestly a gentleman, a man of good and gentlemanly

feelings, and he never would have written me such a letter as this, unless he had heard some stories to my discredit. I certainly did at one time associate with individuals whose acquaintance did me no credit, and contributed not to my improvement, and it is an easy matter to misrepresent what I then was. Indeed, for my own part, I am free to acknowledge, that I should not entertain the most favourable opinion of any one concerning whom such narratives may be given, as may be given of me; but then I know the honesty and purity of my motives and intentions, which others do not know, and which strangers will not make allowance for. Now are you at all aware that any of these literary gentlemen have made any mention of my name to Mr. Riddleton? for if they have talked to him about me, they have also talked to you."

"I will confess to you," said Hartley, "that the coxcomb of a lawyer who was employed by that man Shepherd, did make many inquiries about you, and did speak not very respectfully

of you; and there is that Theodore Clarke, whom you seemed to regard as a man of genius, and your other acquaintance, Dr. Grimwood, I think you call him—these two individuals, since you have left their society, have been rather mortified to lose you, and they call you proud, and speak very strongly of your days of thoughtlessness. It is a great pity that you ever made them your companions."

"And these men are intimate with Spratt and Silversides, I suppose?"

"There is an acquaintance between them," said the Captain.

Now came there upon Frederick's mind a deep and painful impression of his own folly, and he felt that he had indeed played the fool. It was no longer the courtesy of humility for him to call himself a fool; the difficulties into which he had brought himself were now most palpable and galling. It is a painful thing for a mind of any ingenuousness of feeling to be placed under the necessity of vindicating itself,

and there was something especially mortifying in the thought that the vindication might not be successful. He had not the agonies of remorse to feel for actual guilt, with which agonies, when the penitence is sincere, there is sometimes a feeling of compassion; but his were the regrets of absurdity and the mortifications of folly, and there was scarcely any alleviation.

Captain Hartley was really concerned for his friend, for he knew that there was in the constitution of his mind that which was substantially good and valuable; but how to advise, and what to recommend, the good man knew not. Frederick sat silent and sad, revolving many thoughts in his own mind; but his thoughts were all gloomy, painful, and unsatisfactory. Starting at length from his reverie, he rose and took the hand of his friend, saying, "Hartley, I thank you for your kind attentions, but I see no prospect of extricating myself from these perplexities. I will renounce society altogether."

That was one of those determinations that are more easily expressed than fulfilled. Hartley knew that, and said to his friend, "I beg that you will not give way to any such extravagance of feeling; you cannot mean what you say. Suppose we go together and call upon Silversides; he may give us some information as to the nature of the calumnies that are circulated concerning you."

"If you think we shall find him at home this evening, which I fear is very unlikely."

It was a long walk from Hartley's lodgings to the residence of Mr. Silversides; and to walk a long distance in the streets of London after dark is by no means agreeable. The friends moved on in silence; Hartley's thoughts were much taken up with the studies in which he was engaged, preparatory to his change of profession, and Frederick was thinking, with much bitterness of spirit, of the humiliating position in which he had placed himself by his efforts to regenerate the frame of society, and to bring all

men to a rational and proper mode of thinking and acting.

As they were passing through Oxford-street, they were interrupted by a crowd of idlers, standing round a woman who appeared to belong to that class which has more suffering and less pity than any class of the community. Hartley was not partial to crowds, being suspicious of pickpockets, and aware of what trifles will attract a crowd of gapers in London. Frederick was more fond of adventure, and somewhat chivalric in his tastes; and he would fain ascertain the cause of the crowd, being ready with his purse to assist the necessitous, and with his arm to succour the oppressed. Obtaining no information by means of inquiry, he pushed his way through the dense mass, which readily yielded to his commanding person and imposing presence. Sitting upon the steps of a door, was a poor woman sobbing aloud in all the bitterness of despair; and the multitude was regarding her with a most apa-

thetic curiosity. They were looking at her merely because it was not quite the commonest thing in the world to see a decently-dressed, and good-looking woman, sitting upon the steps of a door and weeping aloud.

Frederick was the only individual who seemed disposed to speak to her; but it was not easy to produce an answer. The more considerately and kindly he spoke to her, the more violently she sobbed, and the more suffocating was her grief. Some of the bystanders said, "She is drunk!" but Frederick did not believe them; and, after more perseverance than many would have used, he succeeded in drawing from her an answer to his inquiries.

"Oh, Sir! I am a wretched woman; I have no home, no friends, no food."

"Are you ill, good woman?"

"I am starving," she said; and then she nearly fainted, and Frederick endeavoured to save her from falling, and he observed that her clothing was miserably scanty. Then he

called to mind what he had recently said of himself, as to his being the most wretched of mortals, and he blushed for his folly; for now he saw a miserable being, far more pitiable than himself, in the deepest of his distress, and the sorest of his trials. He looked about for his friend Hartley; the Captain was at hand; but, to say the truth, the gallant one had partaken strongly of the uncandid suspicions of the gazing multitude, and he was wishing that his ardent companion could have a little restrained his Quixotism, and have left the poor woman to the care of the parish-officers. But when Frederick Stratton said, "Hartley, this poor woman seems really dying for want!" the feeling of the Captain was roused, and he drew near and assisted his companion in carrying or leading the woman into the nearest humble-looking shop that was open. And when the multitude saw that their mirth was not likely to be raised by the sight of a drunken woman, nor their feelings stimulated

by the agonies of a dying woman, they departed.

The woman who kept the shop was very civil, though at first dubious concerning the propriety and expediency of admitting into her shop in the evening a woman taken up in the streets; but the very respectable and gentleman-like appearance of Frederick and the Captain was warrant enough. Some refreshment was presently supplied, and the destitute one revived. The work of charity, however, was far from complete; the poor sufferer had declared herself to be homeless and friendless; and a lone woman in the streets of London by night, and pennyless, is indeed a melancholy and a pitiable object. Frederick had not what some persons call strong feelings, but he had what is much better for use, he had the practical result of the knowledge of real sufferings. He could not perhaps declaim upon suffering, or make a picture of grief for the indulgence of the imagination;

but very quietly and steadily he could do the real work of benevolence.

He was hesitating as to the disposal of the poor woman till he should have leisure for making inquiries concerning her situation, and for doing something in the way of permanent and effective benefit; when the woman of the shop said, "Poor thing! she has seen better days."

And then the sufferer hiding her face in both hands sobbed aloud most piteously. Frederick and his companion looked at each other, and Frederick drew out his watch, and perceived that the time was moving rapidly; and Hartley remarked, "We cannot think of leaving the poor creature in this state."

"Certainly not," answered Frederick; and then turning to the woman of the shop, he said, "Can you possibly accommodate the poor creature for one night? a very humble accommodation will serve her, and to-morrow morning we will call again, and see what can be done for her."

While Frederick was speaking, he drew out his purse; and that, or his persuasive tones, found room in the house for the accommodation of the deserted.

Though delayed by this interruption, they were in time to meet with Mr. Silversides; for, as the *conversazione* season had not commenced, he was much at leisure. Mr. Silversides lived in a somewhat more magnificent mansion than usually falls to the lot of men of letters; but it was doubtful whether he had not sacrificed some of the substantialities of life to the outward and visible signs of greatness. The door, which led into a moderately-spacious entrance-hall, was opened by an undersized urchin, who looked like a porter in miniature; and the hall was lighted with a muddy little twinkling, that was a miserable apology for a lamp; but the light, such as it was, beamed from the hand of a bronze Minerva, standing in a recess on the staircase; and the visitors were admitted into a small back drawing-room, through which they

passed into a large front drawing-room:—a merciful arrangement of the master of the mansion, whereby his visitors were spared the overwhelming effect of the sudden splendour of the grand apartment. The drawing-rooms were both intensely literary. Book-cases of Gothic construction filled up every space that could be found for them. There were pictures also; some few paintings of great value and antiquity, certainly not copies, and more than that, not likely to be copied, for they were grievously unintelligible. Heads were there of which no one could make head or tail. There were also divers landscapes and sea-pieces, but a common observer could not at first sight readily say which was which. Maps and prints were not lacking, and there was something erudite and scientific in them all. Busts were perched on the book-cases, thick as pigeons on a dove-cote; casts, statues, and statuary giblets abounded in rich profusion. On the table were books of prints, some in morocco-

binding, and some in pink-paper with Grecian borders, and ornamented with black profiles of Herculaneum pipkins. A time may come when China tea-pots and Wedgewood butter-boats shall be very classical ornaments, and when cocked-hats and muskets shall be grouped in graceful vignettes.

Classical as his drawing-rooms was Mr. Silversides himself. He might be called a literary exquisite. He had that most desirable of all possessions, a most decidedly good opinion of himself; in all matters of literature, in all questions of the fine arts, he was an oracle, and spoke like an oracle. And that is far better than for a man to give an opinion, while he professes an ignorance of the matter in question, or an incompetence to decide. Happy in his good opinion of himself, Mr. Silversides was, moreover, happy in the conceit that all the rest of the world had the same notion of him; happiest of all was he, that no one could by any means shake this good opinion of himself, and

of the world's opinion of himself. This contributed to render him exceedingly good-humoured, gracious, and condescending. He knew not what it was to feel jealousy of any human being. He thought that all the world was filled with thoughts of him and of his works, because he never read any other part of magazines, newspapers, or reviews, except those which contained notices, advertisements, or reviews, of his own productions. He knew that the wise and the good, and the gentle and the good, were his admirers, because he felt himself to be one of the wisest, gentlest, and best.

Captain Hartley, who had been slightly introduced to him, had so happily echoed Mr. Silversides' opinion of himself, that he was an especial favourite. And the Captain, indeed, deserved the estimation in which he was held.

"Captain Hartley," said Mr. Silversides, as soon as the bobtailed footmanikin had introduced him, "I am delighted to see you! But

what brings you so far from home this time of night?"

It is not polite for one who lives far to the West, to take notice of the distance which his friends have to come who live far to the East; it looks like reminding the orientalist of his comparative nothingness. But Hartley was not suspicious of any humiliating intention in such expression; for he had once lived in Houndsditch.

"Give me leave," said the Captain, "to introduce my friend Mr. Frederick Stratton, of Nettlethorpe."

Mr. Silversides bowed gracefully, and said, "I believe we are not altogether strangers."

Frederick Stratton did not feel himself quite comfortable; he had no feeling of humility, but he felt himself humbled, and so far mortified.

To introduce the desired and dreaded discussion, Captain Hartley asked, "Is Mr. Riddle-

ton in town?" And Silversides answered in the affirmative.

After a great deal of awkward stammering, and much hesitation, and many abortive attempts at speaking, which no words can pleasantly or forcibly describe, Captain Hartley at length was able to say, "One object which I have in calling on you this evening, is to ask you, whether it is not in your power to inform my friend Mr. Stratton, who it is that has spoken concerning him to Mr. Riddleton, in a manner which—which calls for—for—some notice on the part of my friend."

Captain Hartley had been reading for orders so diligently, that his military was almost absorbed in his clerical character; and he was nearly choked in the uttering of language that smelt so strongly of unclerical gunpowder.

Mr. Silversides, recollecting the conversation that had passed between himself and Mr. Riddleton, began to feel some suspicion that the inquiry was directed to that conversation; and

he having so great a reverence for Grecian and Roman antiquity, heartily eschewed gunpowder, as a noisy and smoky invention of the moderns. He therefore, with some hesitation, though not quite so much as Captain Hartley had used, said, "I cannot exactly say, but I recollect that, within a day or two, Mr. Riddleton mentioned Mr. Stratton's name to me, and said something of having received a letter from Mr. Stratton himself, containing an acknowledgement of some youthful eccentricities. I don't know what else your friend can refer to."

The feeling of mortification was rankling in the soul of Frederick Stratton, and with no hesitation, but with some asperity of tone and manner, he said, "There must be something more, Mr. Silversides, than the acknowledgement in the letter to which you allude; for no man would so speak of himself, as to give a gentleman an unfavourable opinion of his character. It is true, that I have been eccentric, but I have done nothing that I am ashamed of. I was sincerely

persuaded of the truth of all that I said, and of the propriety of all that I did; enlarged views have modified my opinions on many subjects, but I still have the same zeal for all that is good, and the same contempt for all that is mean and base."

"Certainly, Sir, certainly!" said Mr. Silversides, "there can be no doubt of it."

"Now, Mr. Silversides," continued Frederick, "every body knows that you are upon most intimate terms with Mr. Riddleton, and that it has been by your introduction that several individuals have had access to his *conversaziones*, who were formerly acquainted with me. Have not these people made free with my name and character? Come, Sir, now tell me truly and fairly."

Mr. Silversides smiled, happy that he was likely to escape from the entire imputation, and said, "I have heard your name mentioned by these gentlemen; but your greatest enemy with Mr. Riddleton is one with whom, I believe,

you have little acquaintance. It is a gentleman in the law: I forget his name, but he speaks of having had some business with you recently; and from what I hear, I gather that you rather disappointed him in some speculation which he thought might turn out to his advantage."

Then Frederick Stratton understood that Mr. Shepherd's legal adviser had been making free with his name; but it was not clear to the young gentleman how this worthy practitioner had become possessed of the knowledge of his youthful eccentricities. And when Frederick uttered some expression of astonishment and disgust, Mr. Silversides, gently as he could, explained that this legal adviser had revealed the family secret; and that one and another of Mr. Stratton's good friends had talked so freely and compassionately of 'poor Frederick Stratton,' as they were pleased to call him, that he passed among them for little better than an unprincipled and pennyless adventurer.

With this information there rushed upon the

mind of Frederick so mortifying and distressing a feeling, that he did manifold penance for his hitherto opposition to, and contempt of, the prejudices of society. He no longer wondered at Mr. Riddleton's letter, and he was prepared for all that he was likely to endure in the form of insult and mortification; prepared so far as concerns expectation, but not so far as concerns endurance. Thanking his informant, he departed with his friend Hartley, thinking that this world contained nothing but pains and miseries, and mortifications and disappointments; wondering, also, at the intractability, and stupidity, and obstinacy of the human race in general, and of all his friends and acquaintances in particular.

CHAPTER XXIX.

When Frederick Stratton parted from Captain Hartley, it was with the understanding that the former should call the following morning upon the latter, and that they should go together and make inquiry concerning the poor woman whom they had rescued from perishing miserably in the streets. Hartley was a very punctual man, somewhat fastidiously so. When the appointed hour was passed, the Captain began to grow fidgety; and if he had been an irritable man, he would have been exceedingly angry; and even as it was he did meditate on many harsh words expressive of disappointment. More than once he was on the point of thinking

that his friend, having no notion of the value of his own time, had no regard for the time of others: the Captain, moreover, would fain have gone out to meet his friend, but then he did not know which way he might come, and so they might miss one another, and thus more time would be lost.

But at length the time for meeting was so much gone by, that it was concluded that some accident must have happened. To relieve his suspense, Hartley went to Frederick's hotel, and on inquiring for him, found that he had not made his appearance. Then sprang up in the Captain's mind a thousand fears and apprehensions. Was Frederick ill? or had he—had he, in the agitation of his spirits, and the disappointment of his hopes—had he taken the most effectual method of secluding himself from the world? In short, it actually did occur to Hartley that it was possible that the young man had laid violent hands upon himself. The imagination took such possession of him, that by his

agitation he betrayed his suspicions. The people of the hotel trembled at the apprehension of such a catastrophe, and Frederick Stratton was soon roused from his reverie.

It appeared that he had not overslept himself, but that he had not been in bed at all. He was found sitting in his room in a state of mental abstraction, and when he was spoken to, he started up with elevated eyebrows and wandering look; making as it were a fruitless effort to recall his scattered thoughts, and to arrange his confused ideas. Hartley was relieved at seeing his friend alive, but the relief which tha sight gave him was very imperfect; for Frederick's appearance was sadly altered since the preceding day. He spoke to Hartley, but in a tone so different from that to which he had been accustomed, that the Captain doubted whether his friend recollected him.

"Come," said Hartley, "we must go and see after the poor woman whom we left in care of the shopkeeper last night."

Without changing his tone, or making any alteration in his manner of speaking, Frederick coldly replied, "Yes, certainly, oh yes, by all means, I am very sorry for the poor woman; she has been very ill used, I fear, very ill used. Yes, I 'll go with you."

"But you will take your breakfast first," said the Captain.

"No," said Frederick, "not yet. I 'll go with you, and take my breakfast afterwards."

Captain Hartley had been rather puzzled with Frederick Stratton the very first time he had seen him; but now he was more puzzled than ever,—he absolutely knew not what to make of him. There was an unaccountable wildness in his look, and as unaccountable composure and clearness in his thoughts. He did not seem to have forgotten what had taken place, and in short did not seem to have forgotten any thing but himself. They walked together silently.

When arrived at the place where they had

left the woman the preceding night, great was their astonishment to find that she was not there. "A gentleman," said the woman in the shop, "a very fine gentleman, in a very fine carriage, came about an hour ago and took her away."

"And how," said Frederick, with mighty energy of manner, "should the gentleman know that she was here?"

Hartley stared at his friend with greater astonishment than ever. Frederick then turning to the Captain, vehemently exclaimed, with strong ironical emphasis on the word 'gentleman,' "That gentleman is a villain!"

"Do you know him, then?" asked the Captain; "and do you know the poor woman? You did not seem to know her last night."

"I think I do," said Frederick, in a milder and more subdued tone; "I think I cannot be so much deceived."

Then he stood still in a mood of meditation for a few moments, when the woman who kept

the shop suddenly exclaimed, "There is the carriage again, just now coming back, I declare!"

Frederick rushed into the street, and presently returned, saying, "It is he; I knew I could not mistake him. Oh, the villain!"

He then dragged Hartley away with him, and said, "Come, I will tell you all about it as we go along. Will you be my second, if I should have occasion to fight a duel?"

Captain Hartley, who, though no blusterer, was by no means a coward, would not have hesitated at accepting a challenge, if necessary, but he had some hesitation in aiding and abetting another in giving or receiving one. He replied, "I hope there will be no necessity for it; but at all events, I shall decline having any hand in the business, unless I am properly and amply informed as to the particulars and cause of the quarrel."

"Then you shall know the particulars," said Frederick. "That gentleman who took the

poor woman away this morning I know, and I have seen the woman before. Some of her history I know, and more of it I can suspect. That gentleman's name is Mortimer. The poor woman's name I know not; but you have heard me speak of an eccentric genius named Williams."

"I have," replied Hartley.

"I saw that poor man the very day before his death actually begging; I saw him again on the day of his death, and he was then attended by a young woman. It was the same that we saw last night; I suspected it at the time, I am convinced of it now."

"And was she related to Williams?"

"No, but she ought to have been; and from symptoms that I have observed before, connected with what I have seen and heard this morning, I am convinced that this fellow, this Mortimer, is the guilty one to whom this woman owes her degradation."

Frederick then related to Captain Hartley

the disappearance of the young woman from Williams's cottage, in connexion with the inquiries made by Mr. Mortimer, as already narrated.

"But why," said the Captain, "even granting all this to be perfectly true—and most abominable it is, if it be true—yet why should you take up the matter as a personal quarrel?"

"I am not taking it up as a personal quarrel, but circumstances will compel me to make allusion to it, and I know that I shall not speak to or of that gentleman in most measured terms. Moreover, he is a rival of mine, and he knows more of my history than I would willingly confide to a blockhead."

"Well," replied the Captain, "there may yet be no absolute or unavoidable necessity for you to call him out, nor need you put yourself in the way for him to call you out. You had best take the earliest opportunity of seeing the young lady yourself; and let me per-

suade you, as a friend, not to add to your other and past transgressions of decorum, the folly of duelling."

Frederick paused, hesitated, and sighed. "I am tormented—tormented," said he; "I know not where to turn: I can neither repent, nor persevere. I have tied a knot which galls me, and which I can neither cut nor untie. I want advice, but I can make no use of it; I want friends, but I have nothing for their confidence. 'Tis a miserable thing, that we then have most knowledge when we have least need of it. When a man is arrived at forty, he knows how he ought to have acted at twenty; and when life is quite spent, he has just learned how it ought to have been spent."

"Nay, nay, my good friend," interrupted Hartley, "you wrong yourself by these melancholy moods; you will gain neither wisdom nor virtue by lamentations about folly and vice. Come, return with me to my lodg-

ings, and we will talk the matter over by ourselves. And do, pray, endeavour to compose yourself."

Hartley, it should seem, was a good sort of man, and Frederick Stratton was an odd sort of man. Hartley was exceedingly well disposed to render all possible service to his friend, but yet he felt that he scarcely knew how to manage him. Frederick was astonished and provoked that the generality of mankind were so stupid, and so prejudiced; Hartley thought it a great pity that a young man of such excellent abilities as Frederick Stratton should make so foolish a use of them.

With much reluctance did Frederick take his friend's advice, and return to compose himself at his hotel. But composure is more easily recommended than acquired. He found himself not a whit the better for being alone, but rather, the agitation of his spirits increased, and his mind was more restless and mortified than ever. Reflection presented little to please

him, nor were his anticipations any more satisfactory. He meditated eloquently and impassionately on the peculiar miseries of his situation, and with almost tears did he bewail his singularly hard lot. He was concerned to think that the time was rapidly gliding away, and that he might be considered by Amelia to have acquiesced in Mr. Riddleton's decision, if he did not very speedily enter his protest against it; and then, again, he feared to come to a decisive explanation, lest it should be the death of his hopes: he felt it better to endure the torture of suspense than to live without the balm of hope.

CHAPTER XXX.

FREDERICK STRATTON was right in the conjectures which he had formed concerning the irregularities and meanness of Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer, Esq. This last-named gentleman had the misfortune to be possessed of a most intemperate and boundless love of himself; but he loved himself, as his mother had loved him, with a doating and mistaken fondness, fancying that he was then doing the best for himself, when he procured for himself as much physical enjoyment as he was capable of. Stupid people bring every thing that is good into disrepute: the wine that rejoiceth a man's heart,

is abused by the drunkard till the very word drinking, a word innocent enough in itself, becomes the name of a degrading vice; so self-love, which is the most rigorous nurse of all other loves, and the spring from whence they flow, and the standard by which they are measured, and the principle which keeps them alive, is rendered by stupid people, a low and dirty vice, and the nurse of a thousand other vices; for all the virtues, and all the vices, are nothing more nor less than wise or foolish modifications of self-love.

After some hours of intense meditation and painful reflection, which had very little tendency to compose his mind, or to calm the agitation of his spirits, it occurred to Frederick, that it might be desirable, if it were practicable, to find out the abode of this poor woman, and to endeavour to learn from her some particulars, which might set the character of the Plantagenet in its right light. It is very unpleasant to be surrounded by unknown and undefined ene-

mies, and to have a consciousness that circumstances are, or have been, in existence, which these enemies may make use of to one's injury or destruction. It is a feeling like that which is experienced by a man walking in the dark, and hearing destructive missiles flying about in every direction. It is a species of torment which would drive some minds to madness: almost did it produce this effect upon Frederick Stratton; but, happily for him, the very circumstances of his follies gave him a degree of recklessness, which was no bad auxiliary to him in fearlessly and actively searching out the designs of his enemies. He had been accustomed to strange scenes, and to strange society; and he could pursue investigations which might have baffled the sagacity of such as had been more select in their associates, or more decorous in their early deportment.

Knowing how fruitless it would be to attempt to find out the abode of the unfortunate woman without some better and more definite

clue than could be given by the person into whose shop she had been taken, Frederick bethought himself that the legal adviser of Tom Shepherd might know something of the movements of Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer. He was led into this suspicion by the language of Mr. Silversides and of Captain Hartley, who had both spoken of this legal gentleman as having been mightily active in inquiry, and exceedingly censorious in speaking of him; and therefore Frederick Stratton apprehended that Mr. Mortimer might have made use of this man as his tool. There are some lawyers who are so exceedingly accommodating to their clients, that they will not only give them legal, but any other assistance which they may require.

To the chambers of this ornament of the law did Frederick Stratton betake himself. The man of law was at home, but engaged: how long he would be engaged, the clerks could not tell, but they offered Mr. Stratton a seat and a newspaper, and by the time that Frederick had

read the newspaper through, the lawyer was at liberty.

"You know me, I presume?" said Frederick, as soon as he entered the room.

The lawyer rose up, or, if it be not paradoxical and unintelligible so to speak, he rose down; for when he quitted the stool on which he was sitting, his head was not quite so near the ceiling as it had been before; and thrusting his hands into his breeches-pockets, and extending his right foot to an angle of forty-five degrees, he looked up to Frederick Stratton with a most coxcomical air, and said, "Know you! ay, yes—Mr. Stratton, I think, of Nettlethorpe. I remember, I had some troublesome business to settle for you; there was a case of bigamy, I believe, pretty nearly made out. Is there any intention of prosecuting?"

Frederick Stratton frowned, and said, "No."

"Oh, I beg pardon," said the legal adviser, "I recollect;—no no, of course there can be

no prosecution. But wherein can I be of service to you?"

"You are acquainted, I believe, with a gentleman of the name of Mortimer?"

The lawyer took his hands out of his pockets and rubbed them, and looked down upon the ground, and seemed to be endeavouring to recollect, and he muttered to himself, "Mortimer, Mortimer?" and while he was thus muttering and meditating, Frederick Stratton, in turning his eyes towards a corner of the room, saw a tin-box, on which was painted the name of R. T. P. Mortimer Esq. This abundantly answered the question, and not only so, but presently convinced the young man that there had been some communication between the parties which the lawyer was reluctant to own. Without waiting for any verbal answer, or giving the man of deeds and words time for the fabrication of an ingenious falsehood, Frederick interrupted his soliloquy by saying, "Ay,

Mortimer, Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer, the gentleman whose box stands there," pointing to the corner.

"Oh! yes, yes, yes," stammered out the man of law; "there is a gentleman of that name for whom I sometimes do a little business,—very little though, so very little that I almost forgot his name."

"Have you not seen him since he has been in town?" asked Frederick.

"Is he in town?" asked the lawyer.

Frederick was saved the trouble of answering by one of the clerks at that moment popping in his head and saying, "Mr. Mortimer has called again, Sir, and says that he will not detain you five minutes."

This announcement was uttered with such a provoking distinctness, that it was impossible to imagine that any one within reach of the voice had not heard every syllable. There was now no escape for the crafty solicitor, save his very feeble excuse, "Dear me! I am so overwhelmed

with business, that I shall forget my own name next. I had positively forgot that he was in town."

Then turning to the clerk, he said, "Ask Mr. Mortimer to sit down, and I will be with him in one minute."

Directing his discourse again to Frederick Stratton, he said, "You will have the goodness to excuse me one minute;—but are you in a very great hurry?"

"Oh, by no means," replied Frederick.

"Perhaps you may wish to see Mr. Mortimer?" said the lawyer.

"Not till I have asked you a few questions."

"Well, Sir, I will be with you in a very few minutes, and shall be happy to give you any information in my power."

So saying, the lawyer left the room, and Frederick sat himself down patiently to wait his return. There is not much amusement in a solicitor's office to one who is not a solicitor, and who is not solicitous to become learned in the

law. Books are there in abundance, but they are uninviting, with their ungilded and uncoloured covers, and sadly repulsive by their crabbed and technical look within. Frederick began to want some amusement pleasanter than his own thoughts, for the legal gentleman was slow in returning. Having said that he was in no hurry, he felt bound to express no impatience. When he was tired of sitting he got up and walked about the room; and when he was tired of that, he stood at the window; and when he was tired of standing there, he moved to the book-shelves and looked at the backs of the books—they were too dusty to touch; and when he was tired of gaping at the books, he meditated upon the almanack, and he had plenty of time to examine the engraving wherewith it was decorated, and to read all the lists of the London bankers, and the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, and the Hackney-coach fares, and stamp duties, and all that valuable information which is more instructive than amusing.

There is a point beyond which endurance can endure no longer. To that point Frederick was at last come; and fearful that his legal friend had quite forgotten him, he was about to quit the apartment, when, greatly to his surprise, he found himself fastened in. Now this was of all unaccountable things the most unaccountable; surprise, indignation, curiosity, and all manner of emotions appropriate to the circumstance, took possession of the young man's mind. He thought it possible, barely possible, that there might be some mistake. He rang the bell, but though he heard the movement of feet in the passage, there came no answer to his summons. Furiously he rang the bell a second time, even to the breaking of the bell-pull: now he knew that he was made a prisoner, but for what purpose he was utterly unable to conjecture. He was very angry, and might have broken the windows, but then he considered that he should have to pay for them; and as the lawyer's office was up two pair of stairs, the breaking of the

windows would not tell much towards facilitating his escape. Moreover, it came again into his mind, that there might be possibly some mistake in fastening the door; for the man of law seemed like a crafty and cautious personage, and he might be always in the habit of fastening the door of his private apartment, and he might have turned the key by accident.

But all these doubts were presently dispersed by the opening of the door, and the appearance, not of the lawyer himself, but of two very ill-looking men, who seemed, nevertheless, to be limbs of the law—the lower limbs indeed, that is, runners; and Frederick stared at them with more astonishment than they did at him.

"Come!" said one of them, laying roughly hold of him with a villainously hard and comprehensive hand, "you are our prisoner."

"Your prisoner!" exclaimed the young man; "and pray, Sir, for what?"

With that the prisoner mightily but fruit-

lessly struggled against the rude grasp by which he was held.

"Oh! make yourself perfectly easy, my young spark, you will find two to one rather clumsy odds. Only have the goodness to accompany us, and you shall hear all about it from the very best authority."

Then addressing himself to his companion, the officer remarked, "A gay spark this for a gypsey!"

Then they more hastily than politely dragged him down-stairs, and placed him in a hackney-coach, without giving him an opportunity to take leave of his legal friend.

There are feelings peculiar to every situation, and those feelings which are experienced by a young gentleman thrust against his will into a dirty, greasy, clammy, frowzy, crazy, rickety, rumbling, jumbling hackney-coach, and stuck between two hard-hearted, thick-headed, fast-fisted, hoarse-voiced, gin, snuff, onion, por-

ter, and tobacco-saturated officers, are by no means enviable. But feelings that are unpleasant, are not always unprofitable, or unwholesome; and the mention of the word "gypsey," in connexion with this uncourteous and unexpected arrest, contributed at once to an interpretation of the mystery, and to an enforcement of a great moral lesson.

Frederick had already repented, that, in the simplicity and singleness of his heart, he had played divers wild pranks, and thrown sundry moral and intellectual summersets by way of reorganizing society, and bringing about a more happy order of things. He had fully determined to have no more to do with the gypsies; and whatever doubts he might have entertained concerning the eligibility of their mode of life, he now discovered, to his cost, that it had its inconveniencies: wrapping himself up in the composing thought of his own innocence, he calmly awaited the issue of the present untoward adventure.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE hackney-coach that conveyed Frederick and his companions stopped at last at a police-office; then the young gentleman was compelled to dismount, and he was almost as reluctant to leave the coach as he had been to enter it. In a few seconds he was placed at the bar, and he hardly knew whether he was awake or dreaming. The magistrate looked at him with astonishment, and well he might, for he had never seen so comely-looking a gypsey before; and Frederick looked at the magistrate with such an air of composure, that he seemed to be rather a spectator than a party concerned; but the composure of the young

gentleman was somewhat disturbed when, as fellow-prisoners, he saw two or three of those gypsies with whom he had wandered in the days of his simplicity and singleness of heart; still more disturbed was he, when he heard that the charge brought against him, in conjunction with these his fellow-wanderers, was that of burglariously entering a certain dwelling-house in the parish of Hampstead, in the county of Middlesex, and stealing from thence two fat capons, which said capons were dead and trussed ready for roasting, one ham, one fillet of veal, and sundry pounds of butter.

This was a very serious charge, and Frederick knew not what to say to it. Simplicity and singleness of heart are not admitted at police-offices as any excuse for plundering pantries; nor does it avail much in these repertories of justice to repel such a charge with indignation. On the stage, or at vestry-meetings, gentlemen may repel charges with indignation, and the effect in these cases is sometimes very

fine; but that sort of thing will not go down at police-offices, or at the Old Bailey. Frederick was innocent of the crime laid to his charge, and he looked innocent. The surprise of the moment was great and overwhelming; for the most innocent persons are not quite at their ease when a serious charge is brought against them. There sprang up, however, in the mind of the innocent accused, an unpleasant sort of feeling, in the thought that it was highly possible that, though legally innocent, he might be morally guilty. He had certainly wandered with his gypsey friends through several counties, and he had a recollection of having encamped for a night or two on Hampstead Heath; and, for aught he could now tell to the contrary, he might have partaken of the plundered capons, ham, veal, or butter; but as for entering a pantry to steal therefrom, it was a thing that he had never done or thought of in the whole course of his mortal existence. He had not associated with the gypsies for the sake of any

emolument, or for the purpose of evading the labour to which those are destined who would gain an honest livelihood; for he had left a comfortable and comparatively opulent home: his view had been merely that he might live according to Nature. He had seen so much of the evils and absurdities of the artificial system of living, that at an early age, as has been narrated, he resolved that, if all the rest of the world would be fools, he would not; and so he joined the gypsies; and there had been a time when he would have regarded the present accusation as a species of martyrdom, and he would have been proud to bear his high testimony against the absurdity of the existing state of things; he would have regarded pantries with utter abomination, and would have sympathized more strongly with the plunderers than with the plundered.

Amongst the persons in the office, Frederick recognized the legal gentleman at whose chambers he had been arrested; and he saw that

gentleman in earnest confabulation with Mr. Mortimer. To support the charge against him and the rest of the accused, a young woman was brought forward, who, when desired to look at the prisoners, and to endeavour to recollect their persons, instead of fixing upon Frederick Stratton the eye of an accuser, dropped a polite curtsey, and said to the magistrate, "La! your worship, that gentleman wasn't one of them as robbed the pantry; they was all gypsies."

"But if report speaks true," said the magistrate, "that gentleman, as you call him, was one of a party of gypsies, though he has since had the wisdom to quit them."

The young woman brought forward to accuse Frederick, was no other than the individual whom he and Hartley had rescued from starvation; and while she was addressing the magistrate, Frederick's eye was directed, by the accident of its wandering, to the person of Reginald Tracy Plantagenet Mortimer; and he saw this gentleman cast a look of reproach and dis-

appointment towards this failing witness: so the secret of Squire Mortimer's machinations was revealed, and Frederick felt that he should not be doing himself justice if he forbore to speak. Addressing himself, therefore, to the magistrate, he said,

"May I be allowed to speak?"

"Certainly, you may," said his worship; "but as yet there does not seem to be a case made out against you."

Frederick then said, "I am well aware that no case can be made out against me by any honest means; I am brought here to-day from private and personal motives, and my appearance at this bar may of itself answer the purpose of my enemies. It is true, that I did once join a society of gypsies; I regret it as a folly, I am not ashamed of it as a crime. But I declare and protest by all that is sacred and good, that during the whole of my association with that people, I was never once guilty of any one

breach of the laws of my country, and whatever notions I may at any time have entertained or expressed, concerning the present constitution of society, or the rights of property, never have I committed a single offence against society."

Before Frederick had finished speaking, Mr. Mortimer and his legal friend had retreated from the office, and the witness not being able to speak to the persons of the accused, the charge was dismissed. As soon as he quitted the office, he took especial care not to lose sight of the young woman who had been brought forward as his accuser; she also was anxious to have sight of him.

"And now," said Frederick to her, "you can explain to me this mystery, though it does not seem to require much explanation."

"Oh, Sir," said the poor woman, "that Mr. Mortimer is a wicked man, and a hard-hearted, cruel man, as ever lived."

"I have no doubt of that," said Frederick;

"but let me know the particulars of this strange accusation."

"Certainly, Sir, you shall hear all; only I must tell you my history, or else I cannot give you a proper account."

"Well," said Frederick, "I am prepared to hear it."

They then adjourned to a tavern in the immediate neighbourhood, and the poor woman commenced her narrative.

"It is not more than five years ago since I was in service in Mr. Mortimer's family,—that was while the old gentleman was living,—and the Mr. Mortimer as is now, used to pay me very particular attention, and he used to make many fine speeches, and to say what a pity it was that such a pretty young woman as me should be a menial servant, and all that: not that I minded what he said, only he had such a pretty way of speaking like. It is very true, that I had all the while a sweetheart, a young man as was helper in the stables; but la! there is such a

difference between a gentleman born and a common man; and young master knew as I had a sweetheart, and he used to laugh at Tom's awkward ways, till I grew quite ashamed of him; and Tom saw that I laughed at him, and he went and married somebody else all in a pet, but he is not happy with her."

"Of course not," said Frederick, who was rather impatient to come to the end of the narrative.

"Well, Sir, and, as I was saying, Tom went and married somebody else, and then my young master came laughing to me, and told me now I was at liberty, and I might make my fortune; and though the young squire never said as much, I thought of all things that he meant to marry me, and make a lady of me; he used to take me by the hand so polite, and used to sigh like any thing. Just about that time one of my fellow-servants lent me a book to read, which had been given to her by her grandmother; it was called 'Pamela, or Vir-

tue Rewarded ;' and it did put me so much in mind of myself, you can't think ; perhaps you have not read it, Sir?"

"Oh yes, I have," said Frederick ; "proceed."

"And so, Sir, after reading that book, I could think of nothing else but that I was to be a lady, as a gypsey once told me ; and I did not do right, though I did not think of it at the time, but I took every opportunity to throw myself in the way of my young master, who at last took advantage of me,—it was very unkind of him to deceive me so. And then, when I reproached him, he vowed and protested, and all that sort of thing, like what you read in books. He used to talk very elegant, and I thought that was so very fine, in comparison of poor Tom's blunt ways."

At the mention of poor Tom the woman sighed, and hastily wiped a starting tear, and said, "Well, after all, I wish I had married poor

Tom; but it was not to be: so the Lord's will be done!"

Frederick did not admire the poor woman's logic or theology, but he did not think it worth while to enter into a discussion, and he permitted her, without any interruption, to pursue the thread of her story, which she did as follows:—

"I lived very happy for a little while. The Squire put me into a very pretty house, and hired a young person to wait on me, and I had so many fine things that I looked quite like a lady; and people as didn't know me, took me for a right earnest gentlewoman. But it didn't go on so for long: the old gentleman died, and then young Mr. Mortimer came and said as how he was a going to be a magistrate, and a person of some consequence in the county, and it would not do for him to live at this rate, and he would provide for me; but I must go quite away from those parts altogether. Then, Sir, I began to cry and take on as never was

the likes of it; and he, that very man as used to say such fine speeches to me once, never cared for all my vexation, and, instead of saying a kind word to me, put himself into a towering passion, and swore at me, just like any common vulgar low-lived fellow in the streets. Howsomever, his passion did abate a little at last, and he told me that he had provided for me, and that I was to go to London, and that he would introduce me to a learned gentleman who would take care of me, and, if I behaved well, would make an honest woman of me; so I was introduced to poor Mr. Williams. He was a very kind-speaking man, but he had such wicked notions I was quite shocked: he believed neither God nor Devil; and as for his taking care of me, he did not seem to have a shilling in the world, except what I brought from Mr. Mortimer. But somehow or other we made shift to live, and I did not like to leave him, for I had no wheres to go to, nor nothing to take to for a bit of bread. All my

own friends had forsook me, and I had no character; and folks don't like to take servants without a character now-a-days, 'cause there is so many impositions.

"But I did not like to leave the gentleman, because he was very ill, and there was nobody but me to take care of him. And very often we had no food for a whole day, and I sold all my fine clothes, and then could scarcely get bread. Sometimes Mr. Williams would go out and be from home all day, and would then bring some money home with him. God knows where he got it! But it did not do for me to ask questions. It is a hard thing to want a morsel of bread after being a fine lady; and Mr. Williams himself was once quite a gentleman, and used to have a smart house, and servants to wait on him, and then he had a great many friends, who used to go and see him; but when he became poor, they all turned their backs upon him."

"But, perhaps," said Frederick, prompted

by the strong impulse of self-defence, "they thought that Mr. Williams had misconducted himself."

"Ah, Sir," replied the woman, "but they did not think of that till all his money was gone."

"But did not you say that he was a man who entertained wicked notions?"

"Yes, Sir, true enough: he was a wicked man, but he was good to me; and people, you know, don't forsake wicked men till they become poor. Such poor unfortunate creatures as me don't know any but wicked people."

Frederick found it necessary to give the poor woman a hint to drop the moralizing, and to pursue the narrative vein.

"At last, Sir," continued she, "when Mr. Williams had been out all the day endeavouring, as he said, to get some little assistance from his former friends—he always called them his former friends—he came home in the evening just after dusk, and I shall never forget how heavily

and slowly he stepped in coming up to our room, for we lodged up four pair of stairs; and he looked quite worn out, and he threw himself upon the side of the bed, and with all the strength he possessed, he flung to the farther end of the room a brown paper parcel which he had brought up in his hand. He cried like a child, and I was almost afraid to speak to him, for fear he was in a passion. But he held out his hand to me, and looked at me so pitifully, that I went and sat down by him. I can't say as I ever loved him, but my heart was quite melted to see him thus; and I looked at him, but I could say nothing to comfort him, for I was comfortless enough myself. Then he laid his head upon my shoulder, and I felt his tears through my handkerchief. And he said to me, 'You will not leave me?' and I said, 'No, no, I will not; why do you ask me?' Then he pointed to the paper parcel which was lying on the floor at the farther end of the room, and I went and picked it up, and saw

that it contained some slices of bread and pieces of meat, not such as I had been accustomed to; but I was glad to see it, for I had not eaten a morsel all day: and I said to him, 'Why did you throw it away? I have eaten nothing to-day.' 'Nor I,' said he; and then he fell to crying again most bitterly, and I begged him not to take on so much; but all I could say made no difference; and at last, when he was able to speak, he said, 'Do you see that morsel of bread and meat? I'll tell you where I got it. It was given to me by a man who has sat at my table, who has slept under my roof, who has laughed at my jests, and who has professed to admire my ingenuity.' You may be sure, Sir, I could not but pity the poor man, though he had been ever so wicked. And I thought that now he was in great trouble, he might be brought to reflection; and as I had been religiously brought up, I tried in my poor way to talk to him, and I do believe he would have prayed, but he was too faint.

"After this, I thought I would see if some of my friends in the country would not have pity on me, and do something to save us from starving; so I ventured to go down to my relations, and there was only one who would even speak to me. It was not much that she could do, but she let us have a bit of a cottage to put our heads into, and there poor Mr. Williams was taken ill, and there he died."

Here the narrator ceased, and gave way to tears, which relieved her swelling heart. But as yet, Frederick had not heard any thing like an explanation of the mystery of his arrest. He therefore reminded his informant of the omission; for she was so taken up with her own recollections and her own feelings, that she had nearly forgotten the principal object for which she had commenced her narrative.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE poor woman, at the hint given, proceeded with the story. "Then, Sir, after my poor Mr. Williams had died, and I was thinking what I should do to bury him, that wicked Mr. Mortimer comes to me again—I wonder how he knew I was there—and he tells me I must go away immediately to London, and I must never again on no account make my appearance in those parts, because he was a magistrate, and he would not suffer any sich people, he said, to be about. And then, when I told him how I had nothing to depend on, he gave me some money—not much, you may be sure, for he is a mean, miserly man,—and he told me I

might get into some situation; but he was very positive, he said, that I should not stay there in that neighbourhood; so I was forced to go away, but I could not get any thing of a situation no how. As for the little money that I had, it was soon gone. Then I one day met by accident like in the street with that very same gypsey-woman what once told me my fortune, and said as how I should marry a great squire, and be a real lady. I quite cried again, when I saw her, to think how she had deceived me; but she only laughed at me, and said that Mr. Mortimer was most to blame. So I said, 'Mr. Mortimer is a very wicked man.' 'Well, well!' says she, 'don't go to be angry with the gentleman, he may be a friend to you yet. He has found out the gang that robbed his aunt's house at Hampstead, and as you was there at the time, he wants you to come and give evidence.' 'La!' says I, 'I am sure I don't remember now nothing about them.' 'Oh, but that don't signify,' says she, 'for

Mr. Mortimer knows these are the people, and you have nothing to do but to swear to their persons.' And as I saw that the woman only wanted me to swear falsely, I got away from her as soon as I could, and I was determined never to come near her again if I could help it. I had not then a farthing of money nor a morsel of bread, and I wandered about the streets all day and all night. I thought I must die for want, and I am sure I did not wish to live only just long enough to repent of my sins; but I did not know how to repent, and I was so miserable. It was just then, Sir, that you saw me, and took pity upon me. And how it was I am sure I do not know, but I suppose that the gypsey-woman must have watched me: the next morning Mr. Mortimer came and took me away in his own coach, and talked to me so kind, and explained to me all about the laws of the land, and how necessary it was that the laws should be obeyed, and how that I should be doing my duty to my country, if I did all in my power to

bring wicked people to justice. So he took me to a lawyer's house, and talked me over, till I thought I was going to do something very great for the good of my country. Then he gave me some money, and told me to be in readiness when I was called upon. And sure enough that wicked gypsey-woman had kept me in her eye, for she came to me at the lodging in which Mr. Mortimer had put me, and told me that I must come and appear before the magistrate, and she said that there was one of the prisoners that Mr. Mortimer particularly wished to make an example of, because he had been well brought up, and he had took to wicked courses altogether of his own head. And she said that I must be very particular in taking notice of him; because he was very much altered in his looks since the time as he went about with the gang."

Frederick Stratton bit his lips at this part of the narrative, and felt himself most deeply mortified; nor was he much more gratified when

the poor woman finished her story by saying, "And you know all the rest, Sir; and now only think what a wicked man that Mr. Mortimer must be, to think of accusing a gentleman like you of going about with a gang of gypsies. But I know now all about it; it is only because you are going to be married to the young lady that he wanted to marry himself."

The mind of Frederick Stratton was by no means in an enviable state at the conclusion of this narrative. He pitied the poor simple woman, who had been by her own weakness and her master's wickedness deluded into misery and destitution; but he was also concerned on his own account, that his past follies were rising up in judgment against him.

Now he scarcely knew which way to bend his steps: the day was near its close, and it was then too late to call upon Mr. Riddleton. He felt himself obliged by the information that he had received, and thought that he should be

almost as cruel as Mr. Mortimer himself, if he did not contribute something to keep the poor woman from sinking into the depths of misery or vice. He found that she had no home and no resources. In the hope that her mind was not totally corrupted, he thought that he might safely send her down to Nettlethorpe with a letter to his father, explaining the circumstances, and soliciting that some provision might be made to save her from utter wretchedness. For this purpose it was necessary to have her conveyed or conducted to the inn, from whence the coach departed.

In conducting her thither, Frederick, by a natural instinct of politeness, or from a consideration of the poor sufferer's weariness, offered her his arm, and thus they passed the entrance of Covent Garden Theatre, at the very instant that Mr. Riddleton's carriage, containing Miss Amelia Brownlow and her guardian, with his literary friend Mr. Silversides, stopped to deposit

its contents. Nothing could be more unfortunate. The young man did not dare turn round to see if he was noticed, but he almost felt that their eyes were upon him. Before the day was quite gone, he sought again his friend Captain Hartley, and to him he gave a full, true, and particular account of all that had taken place in the course of the day, and to him he acknowledged, that he had at last begun to think that he had acted very unwisely.

"But there is no help for it now," said he, with a sigh.

"Yes," said the Captain, somewhat doubtfully; "there may be some help, if you will only take a lesson from the past, and be more cautious how you give way to first impulses."

"True," replied Frederick; "but I cannot recall the past, or undo what has been done."

"Certainly not," said Hartley.

"And these follies will be continually quoted against me," answered Frederick, "so that

it is in the power of every ignorant blockhead to insult and molest me. But surely I ought to resent the conduct of Mr. Mortimer?"

"By taking farther notice of him, you only give him opportunity of insulting you the more. It does not appear to me that you are at present under any absolute necessity of calling Mr. Mortimer out: he did not appear as your prosecutor or accuser; and, excuse me for saying so, the case is altogether one without a precedent in the annals of honour. Suppose that you should send him a challenge, and he should decline it, which is very likely; and then he should send to the newspapers a paragraph, stating that a young man, mentioning your name, was had up to the police-office for breaking into a pantry, and the charge being dismissed, the accused person sent a challenge to a gentleman who was present at the examination, and who very properly laughed at the challenger for his chivalric spirit."

"Ay!" exclaimed Frederick again, "now you mention that, I fear that my name will appear in the papers already, in spite of my teeth. Oh! what a precious fool I have been! I shall be made a laughing-stock and a by-word."

With this unpleasant anticipation, Frederick took leave of his friend, and passed another sleepless night. He was not, however, then, as he had been on the preceding night, in a state of mental abstraction; but he was all night long most miserably occupied in thinking and imagining every thing that was vexatious and annoying. Meditation after meditation ran muddling through his mind, but he could not fix his thoughts to any one definite purpose, or pursue any rational train of reflection. Morning, however, came, in spite of his teeth; and it was Sunday morning.

Leaving his hotel long before church-time, the young man walked through many narrow streets, without much, if any, definite purpose or pursuit. There was nothing to interrupt

him in his progress, or to attract his attention, till he was forced to step off the footpath to pass a crowd of tadpole politicians, who were congregated round the half-closed windows of a cabbage and oyster-shop, perusing the contents of the placards, which announced the attractive wonders, and wonderful attractions of the Sunday newspapers. Frederick, with the feeling so natural to Englishmen to look at that which others are looking at, made a slight pause, and, by means of a figure rather taller than most of the gapers, he contrived to catch a glimpse of some of these announcements. There did he find that one paper urged its claim to patronage by virtue of an essay on gratitude, a curious case of crim. con., two horrid murders, and a profound critique on the performance of the dog Carlo, at Sadler's Wells. From another, he learned that the public might be informed, for the small charge of eightpence, that the nation was completely ruined, and that things could not go on so much longer. But that

which seemed the most attractive of all, was a paper announcing that,

"THE SCAVENGER *of this day contains*,

'A complete show up of the —— system.'—'Another hit at Lord F——.'—'Dukes and Duchesses, or a peep behind the curtain.'—'A bit of blood, or a royal and noble row in —— street.'—'Lady C—— in the wrong box.'—'The Gentleman Gypsey, or the Methodist Parson with three Aliases.—Take care of your pantries!"

People talk of sinking in the earth when they are exceedingly shocked, fluttered, or flabbergasted at any sudden and mortifying intelligence; but in London it is no easy matter to sink into the earth, except where the streets are macadamized,—and in those days they were not so. Frederick, therefore, did not attempt to sink into the earth, though he almost thought he could. He moved on, and though he was pretty familiar with Johnson's Dictionary and

Dilworth's Spelling-book, he could not recollect any words at all capable of expressing the feeling which at that moment oppressed him. Shakspeare somewhere has it, "Give sorrow words" —that is within the compass of possibility; but for such indignation as Frederick Stratton then felt, words must be made, there are none that can be given. Could he, at that moment, have seen the foul collector of the garbage of scandal and calumny, and if the reptile had not been too filthy to touch, and too disgusting to approach, he would have crushed him.

It is difficult to say what effect his indignation and other feelings might have produced upon him, had he not found some little vent for these emotions by meeting with Theodore Clarke. It was rather early for Theodore to be abroad; but the truth is, that with him it was, more properly speaking, late on Saturday night, than early on Sunday morning; for he had been spending the evening with some of his ingenuous, and ingenious, and high-spirited

friends, and he was now walking about to refresh himself. He was always most happy to see his good friend Stratton, and, on the present occasion, Frederick was not sorry to see him.

"You seem disturbed," said Mr. Clarke; "have you met with any misfortune?"

"Disturbed!" answered Frederick, with great energy, and in an attitude almost theatric; "come with me."

He grasped Theodore's arm with as much force as if it had been Theodore's habit to leave the company of his friends unbidden; then he dragged him, or rather appeared to drag him—for Theodore was not unwilling to follow him—to the cabbage and oyster-shop, where he had seen the placards concerning the matters contained in the Sunday newspapers.

"Look there!" said Frederick; "read that, and you will not wonder that I look disturbed."

Theodore read it, and calmly replied, "Well! and what of that?"

"What of that?" echoed the young gentleman: "why, don't you see that it alludes to me?"

"Very clearly," answered Theodore; "but I cannot see why you need to disturb yourself about that; you ought to be gratified with the compliment: it intimates that you are a person of some consideration in society; that you have some sense of honour and feeling of decency about you; and that you are also a person of property."

"Upon my word, Clarke, you are very amusing. Now, will you have the goodness to explain yourself, if you have any meaning at all in what you have been saying?"

"I have a meaning, and I will explain myself to you. That paper would never take the trouble to calumniate you, and to show you up, as the phrase is, unless you had some degree of consideration in society, and some friends who might be annoyed by the exposure. Moreover, if you were a worthless and contemptible

fellow, and had no regard for your character, or if you were so poor that you could not pay for a recantation, then you would be let alone. Only send a contradiction of the story, with a little enclosure—only don't write money-letter on the outside; it will be all right next week."

"Next week!" replied Frederick; "but in the mean time what mischief may result from it in the course of this week?"

"Very little," replied Clarke: "there is scarcely one person in a thousand that believes the calumnious tales which are published in that paper; that is, among respectable people."

"But that paper has an immense circulation."

"I know it has: it may be found in all the dirty pot-houses in Wapping, and in all the gin-shops in St. Giles's."

"Gracious heaven!" said Frederick; "what a world we live in!"

"Yes," answered Theodore Clarke, with

mock solemnity; "and so did our fathers before us, and so do all our friends and neighbours with us."

Some consolation, though but little, was derived from this meeting with Theodore Clarke. The violence of Frederick's indignation was somewhat abated, but his feelings of contempt were by no means diminished. His perplexity, with reference to Amelia, was, however, increased; for he feared that some mention of his name, as connected with a police-office, might reach her ear; though he could hardly suppose that the Sunday paper called "The Scavenger" could ever fall into her hands. He knew that her friends were decent people, and therefore he thought it very likely that the name of the paper had never been mentioned in her hearing; for in those days it was thought indecent to mention the very name of the paper in the hearing of a modest woman; and he was very sure that she was not likely to be strolling about on Sunday

mornings in those dirty lanes where the placards of the said paper were exhibited. But, notwithstanding all this, the fact might reach her from some quarter; and the mere statement itself must ruin him, he supposed, for ever in her esteem.

Frederick Stratton here again showed his incompetency to regenerate the great mass of society, and to revolutionize the minds of all men, when he manifested so little knowledge of the human heart as to suppose that love should bow to reason.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ALTHOUGH Theodore Clarke was right, generally speaking, concerning the channels in which the Sunday paper, called the "Scavenger," usually circulated; yet there were some few instances in which it found its way into the hands of individuals who are by common courtesy called gentlemen; nay, farther, it has been said, that when that paper was in existence, persons of education and visible respectability, did sometimes, to gratify their malignity, contribute to the columns of it, according to their ability. In the present instance, Mr. Mortimer, or more probably his solicitor, had constructed the pleasant tale to which reference

was made in the placard mentioned in the last chapter; and as it used to be observed, that those, who were not ashamed of writing in that paper, were ashamed of nothing, Mr. Mortimer carried the said paper to Mr. Riddleton's house on the day of its publication. Mr. Riddleton being a man of letters, and a patron of literature, regarded with some degree of respect every thing that was in print; and he read the article throughout, believing every word of it; and when he had finished, he lifted up his eyes, and said, "Bless me! bless me!"

"What do you think, Sir, of that gentleman," said Mr. Mortimer, "as a husband for your ward?"

"Think, Sir!" answered Mr. Riddleton, "I feel all of a twitter at the very thought of the danger she has escaped. Only think, Mr. Mortimer, the everlasting disgrace that would attach to me, if a ward of mine should be married to a man who had such an awful propensity to plunder pantries; and then to see the number of

names by which the fellow goes—Frederick Stratton, alias Shepherd, a relation of the notorious Jack Shepherd perhaps, alias Miller, alias Smith. What a pity it is that he was not committed for trial and convicted, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation; I don't like hanging; Silversides says he does not approve of the punishment of death for any thing but murder, and I am quite of his opinion; and if this fellow were to be transported for fourteen years, then, perhaps, Amelia might be married before his return, and then there would be no danger."

"I should not apprehend that there would be much danger now, if the young lady were properly aware of the gentleman's character."

"Right," said Mr. Riddleton; "right, I did not think of that; she ought certainly to be informed of it."

Forthwith Amelia was summoned, and Mr. Riddleton was handing to her the paper, when he was interrupted by Mr. Mortimer hastily

seizing it, and saying, "Stay, Sir; that paper is not altogether fit for a young lady's perusal; you had better read aloud the information you wish to communicate."

Mr. Riddleton was a fidgetty man, and had sudden freaks; and at hearing this, he quickly and pettishly replied, "Then, if the paper be not fit for a young lady to peruse, it is not fit to be in my house. Take it away, Mr. Mortimer,—take it away. If the intelligence be true, I shall find it in some decent paper."

"Yes, no doubt," replied Mr. Mortimer; "but there is something so piquant in the manner in which these things are given in this paper."

"Ah, Mr. Mortimer, I don't like that word 'piquant;' it is not an English word, and it is used to express very often what we should be ashamed to utter in plain English."

Amelia was puzzled and annoyed; she was puzzled to know what was the matter alluded to, and which concerned her to know; and she

was annoyed at the reference to a paper which ought not to be put in the hands of a decorous female.

Mr. Mortimer thought, however, that it was a great pity to lose any opportunity of rendering himself agreeable and his rival contemptible in the eyes of Amelia, and therefore he immediately, on thrusting the paper in his pocket, said, "We were speaking, madam, of the account given in the papers this morning, of a young gentleman of your acquaintance having been taken up on suspicion of having committed a robbery, but being discharged for want of evidence. This kind of thing is very unpleasant."

Miss Brownlow had heard something, but very indistinctly and imperfectly, of Frederick Stratton's early absurdities, and had been lectured by her careful guardian on the folly and impropriety of her conduct, in cherishing an attachment to a young gentleman who had acted so strangely and absurdly. But careful guardians may give

very long lectures to young ladies, and these young ladies will not, after all, profit much by such lectures. There had also been on the preceding day an annoyance to the lady's mind, and an irritation of her feelings, in seeing Frederick in suspicious company. But if there be any thing in the world to equal the credulity of lovers, it is their incredulity; for at times the lover will give trust and credence to that which all but lovers can see to be fallacious, and at times also the lover will not believe his own senses. In the case alluded to, Amelia could hardly believe her senses; and if not disposed to believe them, it is not very probable that she should take for granted all that might be asserted by Mr. Mortimer, notwithstanding his high descent, and his four new coach-horses. Still there is a large and troublesome region of doubt between belief and unbelief; there is a great and perplexing twilight between the decided darkness of disbelief, and the clear light of conviction; and there are many people afraid

of ghosts who do not believe in their existence. So situated was the mind of Amelia Brownlow, with reference to Frederick Stratton. She had heard that many men of most irregular conduct have the power of making themselves exceedingly agreeable, and she knew that it was possible for persons of good understanding to play many foolish pranks. Love, however, reasons not; all the links requisite to form a chain of reasoning may be in the lover's mind, but these links are unconnected, and there is not steadiness enough to arrange and connect them. Love, again, is a great leveller; in it the foolish are as wise as the wise, and the wise as foolish as the foolish. Amelia Brownlow, with all her fine understanding and her extensive information, felt this, when she retired to her own apartment, and sat down and wept most bitterly.

Mr. Mortimer felt rather disappointed that Mr. Riddleton was so very fastidious as to hesitate about reading so piquant a paper as "The Scavenger," and he shortly took his leave,

hoping that by some other and less questionable channel the information contained in that precious chronicle might find its way to the eye of Amelia. Justice to Mr. Mortimer, requires that it should be stated explicitly, that he really did think it a great pity that a young lady so beautiful, so accomplished, and of such respectable family as Amelia, should be sacrificed to one so every way unworthy of her as was this Frederick Stratton. Mr. Mortimer had more than the feelings of a rival; he felt mortified that his rival was one so very inferior to himself. It is true, that he had a peculiar standard of admeasurement, to the accuracy of which not every one would yield assent; but he felt it as strongly as if it had been the fairest and the truest.

When Amelia joined her guardian at dinner, she showed symptoms of sorrow by lack of appetite. Of the tears, also, which she had shed in the morning, there were yet strong manifes-

tations in her countenance; and Mr. Riddleton, suspecting that she had been weeping, soon saw that she had; and, in order to give her an appetite for her dinner, he gave her a long lecture upon the sin of not eating. Moreover, he told her, that if she fretted herself into a fever, she would make herself ill, and that would be such a pity. The young lady mentally assented to the truth of these remarks; and yet, notwithstanding all that, her appetite was none the better, nor was her sorrow at all alleviated. There was a very small party at dinner; only Mr. Riddleton, and Amelia, and her mother, and Mr. Silversides. So that the worthy guardian had abundant opportunity to indulge himself in his darling luxury of prate. The servants also, who were waiting at table, had the benefit of hearing their master's wisdom.

"Bless me, cousin! what a pity it is that you make yourself so unhappy. Can't you try now to be cheerful; I wish you would eat a little

bit, if it was ever so little; I am sure it would do you good.—Mr. Silversides, try if you cannot persuade her."

Mr. Silversides did try, but it answered no purpose, nor did Mr. Riddleton perceive that, in attempting to raise the spirits of one, he depressed the spirits of all the rest of the party.

Now during the whole of the morning, and nearly the whole of the day, Frederick Stratton had been indefinitely and undecidedly strolling about, leaving his hotel, and then returning to it, —writing notes, and then destroying them,—ordering hackney-coaches, and then countermanding them,—writing first lines of sonnets, and then scratching them out, or leaving them to dwell in single blessedness. Nor was his purpose a whit more definite till after he had dined, for his appetite was not quite so bad as Amelia's; then, all on a sudden, it somehow came into his mind, that if he did not go and see Amelia, the lady was not likely to come and see him. There also occurred to him the thought, that

he could not make matters worse by going, and that he could not make them better by staying away. And so he resolved to call at once upon Mr. Riddleton, that he might be put out of suspense. All the way there, he had the feelings of a culprit, and a fidgetty sensation of shame. Sadly humiliating, indeed, it was, that he who had set himself up for a rectifier of the whole system of things, and a revolutionizer of the whole frame of society, should descend from that elevation, not only to the ordinary level of the rest of the world, but below it. He that had once looked upon all the world as simpletons, now was compelled to regard himself in an aspect of humility ; and, after having admired his own wisdom, now began to wonder at his own folly. Still, however, he knew that he was not a criminal, and that was one consolation.

The knocker of Mr. Riddleton's door seemed to be electrified ; for, as soon as Frederick's fingers touched it, a shudder ran through his whole frame, and all his nerves were unstrung.

He looked very strangely, but Mr. Riddleton's servants were used to strange-looking beings. He was ushered into the library, and his name was announced to Mr. Riddleton in the dining-room; whereat, the worthy guardian of Miss Brownlow started and almost leaped from his seat, and he said, "Bless me!" more frequently and rapidly, and loudly, than he had ever said it before.

Amelia and her mother were also disturbed, and they rose for the purpose of withdrawing; but Mr. Riddleton anxiously and hastily stopped them, saying, "Bless me! bless me! you are not going to see him. I beg you will sit still, and I will go send him away directly."

The worthy man hurried out of the room with as much trepidation as if he thought that his pantry was about to be robbed. He was not prepared for any very courteous greeting; but still, as he was naturally a very good-natured and good-humoured man, he could not find it in his heart to behave with violence or

harshness to any one. He had a very strong sense of propriety, and could not bear any violation of decorum, or tolerate any thing that was not quite correct; and, in his view of the matter, preaching in the fields, and becoming a methodist, were almost as bad as plundering pantries. He entered the library, intending in very few words to give Frederick his dismissal for ever; but there was this difference between Frederick Stratton and Mr. Mortimer, namely, that while the latter was agreeable to think of, he was not so agreeable to see or converse with; and as to the former, though to the judgment he was not quite correct, yet to the eye and ear he was agreeable and acceptable. So that Mr. Riddleton, by means of his own natural good-humour, and the influence of Frederick Stratton's good address and pleasant looks, accosted the young gentleman with more gentleness and courteousness than he designed.

"You are surprised to see me here, Mr. Riddleton," said Frederick, and before he could

finish the sentence, Mr. Riddleton interrupted him, saying, "Yes, Sir, rather so, I must own; but sit down, Sir, sit down. You received my letter, I presume?"

"I did, Sir," replied Frederick, "and on that account I have taken the liberty to call on you for a little explanation."

"Call on me for an explanation?" gabbled Mr. Riddleton—"Eh! what? What explanation can the letter want?—Explanation, Sir?"

The word explanation has an ominous sound in some ears, and it was rather awkward to Mr. Riddleton, till Mr. Stratton explained what he meant by explanation. "I merely wish to ask you," said he, "whether the letter which I had the honour to receive from you, was written with the knowledge, or at the request, of Miss Brownlow."

"Why,—why as to that matter, Mr. — Mr. Stratton, I do not see the immediate drift of your question: you were pleased to resign the lady, and—and—I thought it but proper that—

that your resignation should be accepted; that 's all, Sir, that 's all."

"I must beg your pardon, Sir," replied Frederick, very calmly and composedly, "if I take the liberty of contradicting you in this matter. The letter which I wrote to Miss Brownlow can hardly be construed in so many words as a resignation of her hand; I left it to her to use her own discretion in rejecting me, or in continuing the acquaintance; and, as the letter which I had the honour to receive from you, did not say that it was the express wish of Miss Brownlow herself that the acquaintance should be discontinued, I merely wish to come to something of a definite understanding upon the point; that is all, Sir."

"Understanding, Mr. Stratton! understanding! Bless me! why yes—yes, you understand;—we, that is, I—as guardian to the young lady,—being, as it were, *in loco parentis*, as the Latins have it,—I, Sir, I took the liberty, if it may be called liberty, of letting you know, on

behalf of my ward, that—that your resignation was most thankfully accepted."

"Then, it does not appear," replied Frederick, "that Miss Brownlow herself has answered my letter. May I ask whether she has seen it?"

"Seen it—seen it?" said Mr. Riddleton; "why no, no, I can't say that she has seen it, if I may so speak; but she is quite aware that you wish to give up the connexion; quite aware, Sir, I assure you."

Frederick Stratton, blind as he might have been upon many points, and inapprehensive as he might have been in many matters, was not so blind or inapprehensive on the present subject, but that he could see that he owed the readiness and promptness of his dismissal rather to Mr. Riddleton than to Amelia; and he also saw that Mr. Riddleton was particularly anxious to bring this unpleasant interview to an end. But, whatever might have been the young gentleman's feelings previously to his entering

the house, he now felt resolved not willingly or easily to leave it till he had seen Amelia. The young lady's guardian was one of those very polite and exquisitely courteous people who can scarcely ever bring themselves, on any consideration, to say any thing harsh or forbidding. Frederick was aware of this, and he also felt that he was taking an undue advantage of the worthy guardian's good-nature, by attempting to obtain an interview with Amelia. He was not, however, to be deterred by slight scruples.

"May I ask you, Sir, is Miss Brownlow at home?"

"At home? at home?" said Mr. Riddleton, with hesitation and embarrassment.

"Yes, Sir," answered Frederick; "I wish to know whether she is in your house now?"

"I cannot but acknowledge that she is; but why do you ask? what end can you propose to yourself by seeing her? I think you had better not disturb her or yourself by a meeting."

"Sir," said the young man, more earnestly

and seriously, " I must see her. If I am to be renounced, it shall be by herself; and I must know that it is her wish and determination. I am scarcely acting honourably to her to withdraw my attentions at so slight and indefinite notice as that which I have hitherto received."

" Oh, yes, yes, my good Sir," said Mr. Riddleton hastily, " you have acted very honourably, very honourably indeed; and I, as the young lady's guardian, do acknowledge and avow that you have done so; yes, I acquit you of all charge to the contrary. It was very honourable of you to offer so candidly and promptly to surrender Amelia's hand; you saw the objections, and it was very honourable of you to make the confession."

Frederick was angry that Mr. Riddleton would not understand him, and he more earnestly said, " Mr. Riddleton, you quite misunderstand me. You speak as if I were desirous of giving up the acquaintance."

" To be sure, Sir," interrupted the vigilant guardian, " or why did you send that letter?

Was not that letter a proposal on your part to give it up?"

Frederick Stratton was mortified at the question thus proposed, and he felt that Mr. Riddleton could not, or would not, enter into his feelings on that point. The colloquy between the parties had so far been of service to the lover, that he was now fully prepared to come to a decided understanding; and the agitation with which he entered the house was considerably abated. No longer, therefore, did he address Mr. Riddleton in the language or with the accent of a suppliant; but, with all the coldness and definiteness of a man of business, he said, "You must excuse me, Sir, if I make a point of seeing Miss Brownlow, that I may understand from herself, positively and decidedly, whether or not it is her wish that our acquaintance should cease. I did not, through the medium of a third person, make an offer of my hand; and it shall not be by any such intervention that I will suffer the acquaintance to cease. Miss Brownlow is in the house; let her know

that I am here; and if she is unwilling to see me, let me know that she is so, and I will give you my word of honour that I will not persecute or annoy her. Will you have the goodness to leave it to the lady's own decision, whether she will see me or not?"

Mr. Riddleton had not seen many comedies or farces, or, at least, he had not properly attended to the moral of them; for, if he had, he must have been very well aware that his ward would have been anxious to see her lover in the very exact proportion in which he was to the mind of her guardian, an improper match for her; on the contrary, this vigilant gentleman, and most dexterous politician, thought that he had nothing to do but merely to inform his ward that her lover was in the house, waiting a definite dismissal, and that she would go in person and dismiss him; or that she would send her compliments to him, saying that she could not think of keeping up an acquaintance with a person who had been a gipsy, and a methodist parson, and a plunderer of pantries. And as

Frederick was earnest in his request, and as Mr. Riddleton saw no danger in granting it, he at length said, " Well, Sir, if you will have it from the young lady herself, that your visits are no longer welcome, it must be so; but I think you are giving her and yourself a great deal of unnecessary trouble. If you will amuse yourself here for a few minutes, I will tell Amelia that you are here, and that you wish to have a refusal directly from her."

So saying, Mr. Riddleton left the room, without listening to any thing more from Frederick, who had just begun to say, in answer to him, that he still misunderstood; and that there was no desire to have a refusal, but merely a wish to know whether or not it was the young lady's own act and deed to drop the acquaintance.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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